

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS IN HISTORY AND FAITH:

AN INVESTIGATION OF TWO CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE EASTER KÉRYGMA

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

by

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Christianity makes its boldest claim when it speaks about a God who acts in time and space events in history such as in the Exodus or the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This claim has always been a part of the Christian message, but since the time of the Enlightenment and the development of the historical-critical method, it has become the focal point of numerous debates among Christian theologians. Does God in fact work in ways which can be

PLEDGE

I do hereby affirm, pledge, and solemnly testify that this thesis, in all its parts, is entirely my own work and that I have received no illegitimate aid or assistance of any sort in its research, organization, composition, or refinement.

(March, 1976)

Many purposes of this thesis are to explore out some of the problems which the modern approach to history poses for Christian faith and then to set forth an alternative approach to the biblical message of God's unique activity in Jesus Christ which will be both meaningful and a challenge to modern man. Rudolf Bultmann's radical application of the historical-critical method to the biblical writings and his resultant negative approach to miracles or the supernatural events recorded in Scripture has been most helpful in clarifying some of the older problems which face the Church in a secular society today. He has raised the question of the relevance of all such supernatural talk for modern man and has attempted to translate the message of the New Testament into meaningful twentieth-century language. Whether or not he has adequately translated the Church's Easter message and how well he has handled the New Testament traditions which confirm the resurrection of Jesus will be explored in Part One of this thesis.

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SUMMARY--ABSTRACT

Christianity makes its boldest claim when it speaks about a God who acts in time and space events in history such as in the Exodus or the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This claim has always been a part of the Christian message; but since the time of the Enlightenment and the development of the historical-critical method, it has become the focal point of numerous debates among Christian theologians. Does God in fact work in ways which can be observed, detected, or experienced through the sensory perceptions of man? Is it conceivable that God would intervene in history by raising someone from the dead?

The primary purpose of this thesis is first of all to point out some of the problems which the modern approach to history poses for Christian faith and then to set forth an alternative approach to the biblical message of God's unique activity in Jesus Christ which will be both meaningful and a challenge to modern man. Rudolf Bultmann's radical application of the historical-critical method to the biblical writings and his resultant negative approach to miracles or the supernatural events recorded in Scripture has been most helpful in clarifying some of the major problems which face the Church in a secular society today. He has raised the question of the relevance of all such supernatural talk for modern man and has attempted to translate the message of the New Testament into meaningful twentieth-century language. Whether or not he has adequately translated the Church's Easter message and how well he has handled the New Testament traditions which confess the resurrection of Jesus will be explored in Part One of this thesis.

It will be shown in Part One that Bultmann's understanding of

the Easter message has been greatly influenced by his understanding of history and how this understanding has guided him to an inappropriate interpretation of the Resurrection narratives.

In Part Two of the thesis, the writer will offer an alternative approach to history which will appreciate the uniqueness of God's activity in raising Jesus from the dead and also set forth another interpretation of the Resurrection narratives. It will be argued that the most appropriate way of examining the Easter faith of the earliest Christian community begins with an open view of history which does not rule out either in principle or methodology the uniqueness of God's activity in history. Following this, a study will be made of the problems of harmony and coherence in the Resurrection narratives and an attempt made to clarify their message.

Before bringing the thesis to a conclusion, a final chapter will be added which will briefly examine the primary arguments generally used to support the case for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It will be shown there that the "case" cannot be based so much upon "air-tight" historical arguments as upon the religious presuppositions which are derived from Christian experience with the Risen Christ.

Through this study it is hoped that a more meaningful confession of the resurrection of Jesus will be set forth which will, on the one hand, appreciate the value of salvation history and, on the other, emphasize the significance of the Easter event in the Church's theology. It is also hoped that through this work a contribution will be made toward a better understanding of the problems in the Resurrection narratives.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

There is little doubt that the kingdom of God and its coming played a significant role in the disciples' understanding of the mission of Jesus. They had anticipated the early establishment of the kingdom and appear to have quarreled among themselves over who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Mt. 18:1). Even the mother of two of the disciples came to Jesus seeking to persuade him to give a place of prominence to her sons in the coming kingdom (Mk. 10:37; Mt. 20:21). After the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples again posed the question most important in their minds, "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6), thereby showing their continued hope in the establishment of an earthly political kingdom.¹ George Ladd believes that these disciples were among those who hailed Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with the cry, "Blessed be the kingdom of our Father David that is coming" (Mk. 11:10).² Not only did the hope of the kingdom occupy the minds of the disciples, but, more especially, Jesus as the bringer or establisher of the kingdom of God seems to have been a dominant hope in the minds of all of his disciples.

It is also clear that the death of Jesus shattered the disciples' hopes for the early establishment of the kingdom. When Jesus

¹See George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, Grand Rapids, 1974, pp. 315-ff. for a more complete discussion of this subject.

²Ibid., p. 316.

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was arrested by the temple guards, his disciples forsook him and fled (Mk. 14:50). Although their conduct after the death of Jesus is not recorded in the Gospels, it is clear that they were deeply discouraged and filled with sadness over the death of their leader (Lk. 24:17, 21). Luke writes that some of Jesus' acquaintances watched his death at a distance (23:49), but they did not identify themselves with him in his hour of suffering. Only in John does it appear that one of the disciples was present at the cross (Jn. 19:26); and there it is the "disciple whom he loved," the evident hero of John's passion and Resurrection narratives.³ None of the disciples had the courage to ask for the body of Jesus for burial purposes, and this was done by Joseph of Arimathea, a Jew whose membership in the Sanhedrin gave him nothing to fear either from Pilate or his colleagues (Mk. 15:43 and in all the Gospels).⁴ It should also be added that the disciples did not come to the tomb at first either, leaving the final respects to their departed master to be paid by the women. The disciples, as Ladd notes, were probably hiding somewhere due to fear that the same fate should overtake them (Jn. 20:19).⁵ The death of Jesus spelled the end of the disciples' hopes for the kingdom of God and must certainly have led them to question the legitimacy of the one in whom they had placed their confidence. The cross, as Bultmann would agree, indeed presented them with a question which had to be answered.⁶ Bultmann correctly points to the right question which

³It is possible that in John's gospel the "beloved disciple" is nothing more than the projected image of what a faithful disciple should be. Cf. see subsequent discussion in Chapter VI, Section 3.

⁴Ladd, loc. cit. ⁵Ibid.

⁶Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 38.

was ever so clearly raised within the disciples; however, as will be discussed at length subsequently, the cross itself did not, as Bultmann contends, disclose the answer to the disciples.⁷ The crucifixion of Jesus was in fact one of the major stumbling blocks to faith in the earliest preaching of the Gospel as is seen in the statement by Paul, "Christ crucified, a stumblingblock to the Jews . . ." (I Cor. 1:23). The hopes of the disciples for their Messiah by definition involved a reigning King, and not, as Ladd rightly points out, ". . . a crucified criminal."⁸ How could their confidence in Jesus be restored?

The New Testament states that in a few short days the disciples' lives were changed, and they began to proclaim a new message in Jerusalem that Jesus was the Messiah and that his death, though brought about by man, was in the will of God (Acts 2:23-26). They claimed that the one whom the Jews had crucified was the giver of life (Acts 3:15) and that through him God had offered the forgiveness of sins and the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets (Acts 3:15-21).⁹ What was it that the New Testament writers contended to be the basis for the change in the disciples' lives and, indeed, in their message?¹⁰

The answer according to the New Testament is, of course, that God has raised up Jesus from the dead. It was because God had raised up Jesus from the dead that the lives of the disciples were so dra-

⁷See discussion in Chapter V, Section 3, Chapter III, Section I.

⁸Ladd, loc. cit. ⁹Ibid.

¹⁰This is the question of how the Proclaimer became the Proclaimed as Bultmann has so ably expressed it. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1970-1, I, 33.

matically changed from a group of fearful men into a band of courageous proclaimers. The resurrection of Jesus stands in a prominent place in the early Christian proclamation. The first recorded Christian sermon, as Ladd correctly notes, was a proclamation of the fact and significance of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:14-36).¹¹ The primary function of the apostles in the earliest Christian fellowship was not one of governing, but one of witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:33). This can, of course, be seen first of all in the required qualifications for the successor of Judas; he must ". . . become with us a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). Throughout the early chapters of the Acts, the resurrection of Jesus is the central theme of proclamation (3:14, 15; 4:8-12, 33; 5:30, 31; 10:39-41; 13:29-33). It was because God has raised up Jesus that the apostles could do mighty works (4:10) and offer to Israel the gift of salvation (4:12). It was also this persistent witness to the resurrection of Jesus that initiated the first official opposition from the religious leaders in Jerusalem against the earliest Christian community (4:1, 2; 5:31, 32). The basic theme or message of the earliest Christians and that which they claimed to be the reason for their very existence was clearly the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Again Ladd is right when he says:

In short, the earliest Christianity did not consist of a new doctrine about God nor of a new hope of immortality nor even of new theological insights about the nature of salvation. It consisted of the recital of a great event, of a mighty act of God: the raising of Christ from the dead. Any new theological emphases are the inevitable meanings of this redemptive Act of God in raising the crucified Jesus from the dead.¹²

Perhaps the classic expression of the early Christian church's

¹¹Ladd, op. cit., p. 317. ¹²Ibid.

belief in the resurrection of Jesus is that of W. D. MacKenzie. He writes:

It is universally admitted that the inchoate community left by Jesus at His crucifixion had no basis in their brief intercourse with Jesus for continuance as a community. They were not organized for political action. Nor was their religious experience definite and strong enough to give them a distinct consciousness or place within the system of the Jewish Church. Their later conduct towards a universal gospel proves this. As an experience it was, as we have seen, real, but bound up with and dependent upon the presence of Jesus with them, and unreleased from Jewish bonds. When He lay dead their faith was ready to die. . . . The grief which all the Gospels depict, the story of Thomas, the moral perplexity of Peter, the evident preparation for a permanent burial, combine to illustrate a situation which the whole history of human experience would compel us to expect as the only natural one. Moreover, there was a particular religious view of the situation which must have stained even the inevitable despair with shame and dismay. For an ancient law which was perfectly familiar to them, and which, indeed made a crucifixion a matter of peculiar horror to the Jewish imagination, asserted that a man who was executed, or exposed in death, on a cross was proved by that very event to have been accursed of God (Dt. 21:23; Acts 5:30-ff., Gal. 3:13, cf. I Co. 1:23 "a Messiah crucified!"). These facts are named here not for an apologetic purpose, but to account for the fact that practically all scholars, from Strauss onward, have held that the Christian Church could have risen only when the disciples came to have the Resurrection faith.¹³

Again MacKenzie writes, ". . . it was this sudden conviction that God had raised Jesus from the dead that thrilled the despairing disciples with new life."¹⁴

From the above discussion several generally accepted facts may be pointed out. First of all, Jesus died. Secondly, his disciples lost their faith or confidence in him, the one who would establish the kingdom, and were greatly discouraged. Thirdly, within a relatively short period of time the disciples regained their faith and confidence in Jesus as the bringer of salvation, the Messiah. And finally, the Christian Church grew as a result of the disciples'

¹³W. D. MacKenzie, "Jesus Christ," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. by James Hastings, Edinburgh, 1914, VII, 523-4.

¹⁴Ibid.

preaching about the resurrection of Jesus and the significance of this for forgiveness and salvation. A greatly disputed fifth fact, which will be discussed in detail later, is the report of the empty tomb following Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

All of the above facts are congruous with the early Christian proclamation that God had raised up Jesus from the dead, but what of the event itself? What in fact happened in the resurrection of Jesus? To be sure, a final answer is not possible since the New Testament does not record any eyewitness testimony to the resurrection itself, only to the post-resurrection appearances.

The question of what happened in the resurrection of Jesus is two-fold: First, there is the historical problem regarding the supernatural character of the event in question. Is it historically credible to confess that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified on a cross some two thousand years ago, is now alive because he has been raised from the dead? Secondly, there is also an exegetical question involving what it was in fact that happened according to the New Testament in the resurrection of Jesus. It is a well-known fact that there are numerous discrepancies in the Resurrection narratives which have long defied harmonization. Among them one might ask, how was Jesus raised from the dead? How shall his appearances be understood? To whom did he first appear and where? These and others are all very important questions which evade simple explanations. Indeed, precisely what it was that happened in the resurrection of Jesus is no more clear to Christian faith than it is to the historian since the Resurrection narratives are not clear on the matter.

Any explanation of these questions will necessarily involve an examination of the meaning and method of history as it relates to Christian faith, as well as a careful look at the Easter traditions

themselves, in order to determine what the biblical writers were trying to say. In the following chapters of this thesis, the writer will explore these questions both in Bultmann's theology and in an alternate approach in order to set forth a more meaningful answer to the questions which the resurrection of Jesus pose for Christian faith today. No attempt will be made to prove the resurrection of Jesus, as if that were possible, or yet to reconstruct all of the events described in the Easter narratives. This writer will simply try to describe the relation between historical thinking and Christian faith and, in light of this, set forth a meaningful way of confessing the Easter event. After this an examination of the Easter traditions will be made for the purpose of trying to establish what it was that the New Testament says happened in the resurrection of Jesus. Did the resurrection of Jesus really occur and, if so, in what sense should it be understood? It will be shown that Bultmann's answers to these questions are radically different from those offered by traditional orthodox Christianity.

The earliest Christians confessed that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen [or 'appeared'] . . ." (I Cor. 15:3-5). Further, as will be argued subsequently, they professed faith in a God who has revealed himself to man through his redemptive "Acts" in Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind. In the following chapters an attempt will be made to show two very distinct ways of making God's activity in Jesus Christ relevant and meaningful to modern man. The first of these two approaches is the one held by Rudolf Bultmann which is essentially an attempt to redefine the message of the New Testament in existential categories. Before any discussion of this procedure and the alterna-

tive to it, however, some rationale should be given for having chosen to focus upon Bultmann's admittedly rather limited treatment of the resurrection of Jesus.

II. AN INTRODUCTION TO BULTMANN'S APPROACH TO EASTER

Although it is quite common among New Testament scholars today to speak about a "post-Bultmannian era," no one would be so quick as to say that the final word about Rudolf Bultmann has been written or that his influence upon New Testament theology has ceased.¹⁵ To be sure, it is difficult to understand how any scholar who seriously attempts to wrestle with the many problems of New Testament research could fail to come to grips with the questions and issues raised by Professor Bultmann. His attempt to make Christianity relevant for modern man has caused no end of controversy and heated debate among theologians, especially because of the radical results of his critical examination of the New Testament and his re-interpretation of the New Testament kerygma with the aid of existential philosophy.

Because of his "existential-historical" approach to theology, Bultmann has been properly called an "existential theologian." His approach is based on the fact that man is the central element of history and that man cannot view history from the outside or "objectively" because he is very much a part of the historical process.¹⁶

¹⁵Charles W. Kegley has included in the book he has edited on Bultmann's theology an autobiography by Professor Bultmann which is highly informative for an understanding of the development in his theology from his early days of study at Tübingen until the present. Cf. Charles W. Kegley, ed., "Autobiographical Reflections of Rudolf Bultmann," The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, London, 1966, pp. xix-xxv.

¹⁶Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology, Edinburgh, 1957, p. 138.

For Bultmann, the meaning of history is not found in the reconstruction of past events, but in the personal history of each man which unfolds in and through responsible decisions. As a result of this, the historian must place the question of human existence as primary, finding meaning in the personal and present dimensions.¹⁷ When this approach is used in theology, however, several problems arise (as will be shown in the next chapter) not the least of which is the subject of theology, i.e., is the central figure of theology God or man and his existence? How adequate is the study of human existence for an understanding of God? As will be shown, the weakness of this approach is found especially in the study of the resurrection of Jesus.

Together with Karl Barth, Paul Tillich and Friedrich Gogarten, Rudolf Bultmann is also known as a "dialectical" theologian. Whatever else may be said about this term, it is important to Bultmann when he accepts this designation that it does not refer to a theological system that can be deduced from a dogmatic principle.¹⁸ Dialectical theology is not a method of investigation, but a specific way of speaking historically about God in which the concept of truth is not based on true statements, but on the concept of reality. Bultmann explains that a theological statement is not true because it can be held to be timelessly valid, but it is true only ". . . when it gives the answer to the question posed by the concrete situation in time to which the sentence itself belongs when it is being spo-

¹⁷Norman B.J. Young, History and Existential Theology, London, 1969, p. 16.

¹⁸Rudolf Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, ed. by Robert W. Funk, trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith, London, 1969, p. 145.

ken."¹⁹ He illustrates this by saying that knowledge of God's grace is not knowledge of a timeless truth of the past, but of a specific acceptance of God's gracious act which is gained by the intimate relationship between God and man in a given historical situation.²⁰ For Bultmann, dialectical theology provides an insight into the historical nature of man's being, namely, the historical nature of his speaking about God.

The dialectical theologian, therefore, is interested in the historical nature of man and in his speaking about God. When this principle is applied to the New Testament, the theologian is concerned with the exercise of historical understanding and the possibilities opened up by history for human existence. The significance of this principle according to Bultmann:

. . . does not consist in definite theological propositions presented to the investigator either for criticism or as the basis for exegesis. The insight into the dialectic of man's existence, that is, into the historical nature of man and of his statements, opens to the investigator a new road which is not a substitute for the old historical method, but which deepens it.²¹

The insight of dialectical theology, then, is its understanding of the historical nature of man's existence.

As the name suggests, dialectical theology also points to the belief that one cannot characterize God in some simple formula, but that He must be spoken of paradoxically by balancing each affirmation with a corresponding negation. Bultmann says that this involves a setting of two partial truths against each other and the combining of them so that it may be possible to grasp an underlining principle.²² This aspect of dialectical theology is especially important to Bult-

¹⁹Ibid., p. 147. ²⁰Ibid., p. 148.

²¹Ibid., p. 163. ²²Ibid., p. 146.

mann and is an integral part of his procedure which further leads him to deny the dependence of faith upon certain theological statements acknowledged to be true.

Much of the current debate centering upon Bultmann's labors has been directly related to his view of history. Some scholars contend that most of Bultmann's theological contributions are a direct result of his view of history, especially his application of the historical method to Scripture.²³ That Bultmann accepts and employs the historical-critical method (and its basic assumptions) is not surprising to anyone today, but how he has broadened or "deepened"²⁴ this view of history with his existential approach to the New Testament has been the source of considerable confusion, especially among his critics. Bultmann's application of the historical-critical method to the New Testament, together with his existential hermeneutic of human self-understanding, have set him on a course of one of the most radical re-interpretations of the New Testament in modern times which continues to demand careful consideration on the part of serious students of theology. Although Bultmann does not believe that the historical method can bring one to the shores of ultimate reality (God) through a critical or historical substantiation of the Christian proclamation, or that its conclusions are of major or even of significant concern to Christian faith, his whole theological approach is strongly influenced by it. Bultmann's theological procedure is vitally interested in history--a fact which surely must be granted by all, but what he means by history and how he employs it in

²³Young, op. cit., p. 154; Ian Henderson, Rudolf Bultmann, London, 1968, p. 36.

²⁴Bultmann, loc. cit.

his theological endeavors has brought forth strong negative reaction from his critics especially regarding the resurrection of Jesus.

Because Bultmann's understanding of history and philosophy are so closely connected with his whole theological method, it is very difficult to isolate any one part of his theology from his total theological procedure and still do justice to it. In this case, it is necessary to examine Bultmann's historical understanding before one can comprehend the role of Easter faith in his theological method. An understanding of his theological procedure in turn points to the logic of his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, apart from some understanding of Bultmann's theological method with its existential-historical emphasis, it is not possible to discern fully the reasoning behind his well-known statement, "An historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable!"²⁵

Bultmann's comments on the resurrection of Jesus, although rather small in comparison to some of his major labors,²⁶ have been highly significant especially because of his focus upon the existential implications of Easter and because of the reactions among critical scholars to his attitude toward the unique activity of God in history. Although his writings on the resurrection of Jesus and the Resurrection narratives are quite limited, it is interesting that very few of the authors of some of the best exegetical and historical examinations of Christian origins have omitted discussing Bultmann's

²⁵Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *op. cit.*, p. 39. See Chapter II where Bultmann's understanding of history is discussed.

²⁶E.g., History of the Synoptic Tradition, Theology of the New Testament, The Gospel of John.

interpretation of the Easter event.²⁷ Bultmann's ability to focus upon the major questions and issues of Christian faith--however he may have tried to answer those questions--is to a large extent the reason for his continued influence in New Testament studies today. It is also because of his having focused upon some of the most important issues of Easter faith and his influence in this field of study that this writer has chosen not only to examine and critique Bultmann's understanding of the Resurrection, but also to use it as the basis and "spring board" for an alternate approach to the Easter traditions.

The resurrection of Jesus is a highly complicated issue, not to mention a vitally significant issue in Christian theology. A correct understanding of it will involve the best historical, philosophical, and exegetical labors of the theologian. More than any other theologian of the twentieth century, Bultmann has brought to the biblical text in himself a rare combination of historian, philosopher, and exegete. All of these Bultmanns converge at the resurrection of Jesus; and although his labors here have provoked a great amount of criticism from his contemporaries, his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus forces into the open some of the most important questions of Christian faith.

III. THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE THESIS

The primary purpose of this thesis is to point out some of

²⁷E.g., Willi Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem," The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, ed. by C. F. D. Moule, trans. by Dorothea M. Barton and R. A. Wilson, London, 1968, p. 18; C. F. Evans, Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, pp. 71, 79, 119-ff; Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, New York, 1964, pp. 205-11; R. H. Fuller, Formation of the Resurrection Narratives, London, 1972, pp. 1-ff.

the major problems which history poses for Christian faith, and these problems are seen most clearly through a study of the resurrection of Jesus in current critical theology. Bultmann's radical application of the historical method to the biblical writings and his resultant negative approach to miracles have been most helpful in clarifying some of the major issues involved in contemporary New Testament studies. The most important of the miracles in the New Testament is of course the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (I Cor. 15:12-20), and it is especially here that the case for God's unique activity in history is most crucial for Christian faith (e.g., Rom. 4:25, 10:9-10). Bultmann has rightly raised the question of the relevance of all such talk for modern man, and he has diligently sought to translate the message of the New Testament into meaningful twentieth-century language. Whether or not he has correctly translated its message or adequately handled its varied sources is a question which will be explored in the following chapters of this thesis.

Although Bultmann's negative approach to the miracles of the New Testament is well known to most scholars, the basis for his rejection and/or reinterpretation of them is much more complicated than is commonly acknowledged. Why does he reject the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as an event of history? Again, and even more importantly, how can Bultmann continue to speak in a meaningful way of the existential benefits of Easter faith when he rejects the New Testament understanding of the Easter event? Bultmann's answers to these and other important questions will provide the basis and direction for Part One of this thesis as well as the occasion for another approach to the Easter event in the New Testament in Part Two.

Chapter Two will focus upon Bultmann's understanding of his-

tory and myth; and although it is essentially a recital of Bultmann's position rather than a critical analysis of it, the information here will provide the basis for understanding Bultmann's approach to the resurrection of Jesus in Chapter Three. It will become clear in Chapter Three how his historical hermeneutical assumptions have affected not only his interpretation of the Easter traditions, but also his relative lack of concern for them as well.

In Chapter Three a number of important questions will be raised which will not only point to the major weaknesses in Bultmann's approach, but will also indicate his major contributions to the understanding of Easter faith and the basis for his rather negative approach to the Resurrection narratives.

In Chapter Four the question will be raised regarding the relationship of Bultmann's understanding of Easter to the Easter traditions themselves. This chapter will also attempt to describe the basic message of each of the narratives together with their corporate understanding of the origins of Easter faith which Bultmann believes is obscure in the narratives. This analysis will also provide a basis for the subsequent discussion of the problems in the Resurrection narratives in Chapters Six and Seven.

Part Two of this thesis will begin in Chapter Five with a discussion of the historical method and the effects of its application to the Easter story. The last section of that chapter will offer an alternate way of viewing the resurrection of Jesus which is a combined historical and theological approach to the Easter proclamation. In Chapters Six and Seven an attempt will be made to wrestle with the problems in the Resurrection narratives for the purpose of trying to discover what it was that the New Testament says happened in the resurrection of Jesus. Although there are many questions which can-

not be answered in this regard, certain rather clear conclusions can be argued quite strongly.

Before bringing the thesis to a conclusion, a final chapter will be added which will briefly examine the primary arguments which are generally used to support the case for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It will be argued there that the "case" cannot be based upon "air-tight" historical arguments so much as upon the religious presuppositions which are derived from Christian experience with the Risen Christ.

It is this writer's aim that through the following study a more meaningful confession of the resurrection of Jesus will be set forth which will, on the one hand, appreciate the value of salvation history and, on the other, emphasize the significance of the Easter event in the Church's theology. It is also hoped that through this work a contribution will be made toward a better understanding of the problems in the Resurrection narratives.

BULTMANN'S UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY AND MYTH

An exhaustive discussion of Bultmann's understanding of history will not be undertaken here. Because of the primary interests of this thesis, only those areas of Bultmann's historical understanding which help to clarify his theological method and its relation to his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus will receive attention here.

1. NATURE AND HISTORY

PART ONE

BULTMANN'S EXISTENTIAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE EASTER EVENT

For Bultmann it is important to maintain the distinction between "nature" and "history" and between the functions and interests of the natural scientist and the historian. "Nature" is investigated primarily for the purpose of discovering its origin, functions, and/or laws which govern it. Nature is viewed objectively by the scientist from an "outside" perspective, that is, one which does not involve the scientist emotionally or personally with the object of his investigation. Although man can be studied as a part of nature from an objective perspective in so far as he can be examined biologically,¹ e.g., the physiological functions of his body, etc., the historian studies only man's actions which are determined by his decisions rather than by natural law or necessity. Besides the activity itself, the historian considers the thought processes of the person performing the action and not necessarily the bodily functions of the person unless they constitute a decisive

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *Mythos and Myth*, ed. by Hans Kerner-Schubert, trans. by Reginald A. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 6-7.

CHAPTER II

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An exhaustive discussion of Bultmann's understanding of history will not be undertaken here. Because of the primary interests of this thesis, only those areas of Bultmann's historical understanding which help to clarify his theological method and its relation to his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus will receive attention here.

I. NATURE AND HISTORY

For Bultmann it is important to maintain the distinction between "nature" and "history" and between the functions and interests of the natural scientist and the historian. "Nature" is investigated primarily for the purpose of discovering its origin, functions, and/or laws which govern it. Nature is viewed objectively by the scientist from an "outside" perspective, that is, one which does not involve the scientist emotionally or personally with the object of his investigation. Although man can be studied as a part of nature from an objective perspective in so far as he can be examined biologically,¹ e.g., the physiological functions of his body, etc., the historian studies only man's actions which are determined by his decisions rather than by natural laws or necessity. Besides the activity itself, the historian considers the thought processes of the person performing the action and not necessarily the bodily functions of the person unless they constitute a decisive

¹Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 6-7.

factor in that person's activity, e.g., in the sense that an illness might affect one's actions or decisions. The historian is only interested in human activity unless there are certain natural phenomena which affect man's activity such as an earthquake, a very cold winter, etc. Because he himself is involved in the process of history and because he himself is a man, the historian can only investigate history from within the process of human activity and never from some "objective" point outside the sphere of his work. He cannot extricate himself from history because he is always involved in its process, and it therefore follows that the historian practices a "subjective" method of investigation.² Bultmann explains the distinction between nature and history as follows:

Man, if he rightly understands himself, differentiates himself from nature. When he observes nature, he perceives there something objective which is not himself. When he turns his attention to history, however, he must admit himself to be a part of history; he is considering a living complex of events in which he is essentially involved. . . . Hence there cannot be an impartial observation of history in the same sense that there can be an impersonal observation of nature.³

Bultmann's objection to the confusion between history and nature goes back to his rejection of old liberalism which he believed degraded its theology into pantheism.⁴ Liberal theology held that the revelation of God could be perceived within the nexus of intra-worldly relations. Christianity was also capable of being explained within this nexus in accordance with the development of social psychology (Pfleiderer and Troeltsch⁵) or in other ways which are in

²Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus, Tübingen, 1964, pp. 7-9.

³Ibid., quoted by Norman J. Young, History and Existential Theology, London, 1969, pp. 18-9.

⁴Rudolf Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, ed. by Robert W. Funk, trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith, London, 1966, p. 32.

⁵Ibid.

harmony with the natural development of man. All spiritual "forces" operative in man were to be explained in intra-mundane categories of thought. God and/or the consciousness of God in man was to be explained in terms of natural phenomena thereby opening up the way for a pantheistic theology. This pantheism in liberal theology was based on the similarity between nature and history, that is, the concepts which are valid for nature are accepted as equally valid for history. Man could therefore be studied objectively as another object of nature rather than from the categories which are drawn from man as the subject of history.⁶ Bultmann accepts the fact that man can be studied as an object of nature, but this method of examination is inadequate because it does not take into account man's freedom, his self-understanding, or his decisions in concrete situations. A "natural" investigation of man does not take these elements into consideration, but it is these elements which distinguish man from an object of nature and make him an historical being.⁷ Bultmann argued against this so-called pantheistic theology because it sought a direct knowledge of God from nature thereby viewing God as an "entity," as an object of the kind to which the relationship of direct knowledge is possible.⁸ By demonstrating the interrelatedness of historical phenomena, liberal theology claimed that it had attained to the comprehension of divine powers. This was emphasized by Ritschl who was convinced that history as known through scientific research has a positive value for faith.⁹ Bultmann rejected

⁶Ibid.

⁷Cf. Charles W. Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, London, 1966, p. 267.

⁸Bultmann, op. cit., p. 33. ⁹Ibid., pp. 34-6.

Ritschlian theology because among other reasons he could not accept that God was an entity given in history. There were no scientific laws which could demonstrate God's love and forgiveness. He argued:

I cannot prove from history that more is present than phenomena of this world; I cannot prove that love and forgiveness are here revealed objectively as acts of God and as acts which affect me.¹⁰

By accepting a similarity between nature and history, liberal theology, according to Bultmann, dissolved God into nature. Theology was then reduced to timeless truths self-evident in the historical process, and Jesus merely became ". . . the symbol and bearer of all religious and ethical goods and verities."¹¹ Thus was the "stumbling block" of Christianity removed and consequently the significance of faith itself. Bultmann has consistently rejected this theology which reduced the essence of Christianity to a list of timeless truths and ideals of possible human conduct.¹²

Bultmann argues for a distinction between nature and history because in any science an understanding is determined by its object, and there are no categories in nature which can either fully understand human existence or disclose God. Bultmann argued that man is a historical and self-determining being. Unlike the beings of nature, man is not placed in the causal continuum of natural processes, but must himself assume responsibility for his being.¹³ Such attempts to assimilate history to nature not only misunderstand human being, but

¹⁰Ibid., p. 38. ¹¹Ibid., pp. 38-9.

¹²Rudolf Bultmann, "General Truths and Christian Proclamation," History and Hermeneutic, Wolfhart Pannenberg, et. al., Vol. 4 of Journal for Theology and the Church, ed. by Robert W. Funk, New York, 1967, pp. 153-7.

¹³Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing," New Testament Issues, ed. by Richard Batey, London, 1970, p. 37.

they also remove the "stumbling-block" of Christianity and the essence of Christian faith. Bultmann believes that the understanding of God in liberal theology is not really a theology at all, but a system of thinking that ceases to talk about God and deals only with man and human consciousness.¹⁴

II. HISTORIE AND GESCHICHTE

As indicated above, Bultmann is willing to admit that man can be studied scientifically as a part of nature. He is also willing to admit that history, because it has to do with the life of man, can be approached objectively with the same critical tools which are appropriate to nature.¹⁵ Also, though human decisions are not determined by causal necessity, they are still connected by the sequence of cause and effect. No event, no act of the will, and no decision is without a cause; but each is immersed in a series of cause and effect events.¹⁶ He believes that the science of history can examine the concrete situations of past history and present them in an "objectifying" manner through the historical method; however, the historical method cannot describe the significance or meaning of an event. It can only know the simple facts of an event, i.e., wie es eigentlich

¹⁴Rudolf Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, op. cit., p. 37. It is interesting to note in passing that this has been one of the frequent criticisms raised against Bultmann (cf. William Hordern, Introduction to Theology, Vol. I of New Directions in Theology Today, ed. by William Hordern, London, 1968, p. 34); but, as will be shown in another section, this is really a misunderstanding of him.

¹⁵Young, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁶Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing," op. cit., pp. 36-8.

gewesen ist.¹⁷

This limitation of the historical method led Bultmann to speak about two kinds of reality in history. First, there is the reality of the world which is represented in objectifying vision based upon a phenomenological analysis and discovered through verifiable sense-experience. However, the reality spoken of here is one in kind, not completeness.¹⁸ The other kind of reality of which Bultmann is aware is that in which historical reality is distinguished from the reality discovered through the natural sciences. Man is viewed as one whose being is historical and different in principle from the being of nature which is perceived through objectifying vision, i.e., through scientific critical research. Man exists in a different way from plants and animals, and he must therefore be described in distinctively human terms. History described in human terms is the field of human decision and the field of possibilities for human understanding. Historical reality in this sense is interested in man's understanding of existence concretely at work in history.¹⁹ Man is seen to live either "authentically" or "inauthentically" (i.e., indecision about the present), and the possibility of living authentically or inauthentically belongs to historicity or the specific location of human activity.²⁰ "Authentic human being" is an existence in which man takes over himself and is responsible for himself being open for the future and a free person in the concrete present. "Inauthentic human

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 35-6. That critical research could examine or verify all objective reality is often termed the "verificationist legacy" and is rejected by many scholars today. For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Terence Penelhum, Problems of Religious Knowledge, London, 1971, pp. 66-86.

¹⁹Bultmann, op. cit., p. 37. ²⁰Ibid.

being" is a decisionless existence²¹ in which one relies on the causal forces of nature to determine his existence for him.²²

It must be kept in mind here that even though Bultmann speaks of two kinds of realities, he does not separate them. A "historical" event of human understanding is not separate from the "objective" reality of the past. They are simply two parts of one whole, and they are not mutually contradictory. An existentialist interpretation of historical reality, or human self-understanding, is an absurdity if it is not grounded in objective historical events of the past. The possibilities of human self-understanding of the present and for the future are opened up by the past. Responsible decisions, therefore, always take place in the body which is always found in a concrete historical situation.²³ Because of this, an existentialist interpretation of history always has need of an objectifying view of the historical past. Possibilities for authentic existence become real possibilities only if they are derived from the past.²⁴

Bultmann was not the first to speak about two kinds of historical reality. Martin Kähler saw that historical facts do not reveal their significance or meaning; they must be interpreted. Kähler was the first theologian who distinguished between these two facets of history. He called the task of reconstruction of the historical past "Historie," and he called the interpretation or signifi-

²¹"Inauthentic being" is also the result of making the "wrong" decisions about one's existence and therefore resulting in the misappropriation of the possibilities of authentic being in the future. By failing to decide, the results are essentially the same as deciding wrongfully. Man is responsible for his own existence and must therefore decide from the past on the possibilities of human existence which lie in the future. This will be discussed more in the following section.

²²Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 37-8. ²³Ibid., pp. 38-40.

²⁴Ibid., p. 38.

cance of those facts "Geschichte."²⁵ Applying this distinction of terms to Jesus Christ, he said that the only real Christ was the preached Christ. The "historical Jesus," whom nineteenth-century liberal scholars sought, was not to be found in their "historical" reconstructions of the past which was guided by their positivistic assumptions of historiography. For Kähler, the real Christ was the preached Christ found in the kerygma of the New Testament. The real Jesus was not the historische Jesus of historical research, but the geschichtliche, biblical Christ whom the New Testament proclaims.²⁶ Although Kähler accepted the continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith, he said that the historical Jesus as seen in his earthly ministry did not win from his disciples a faith with the power of witness, but only ". . . a very shaky loyalty susceptible to panic and betrayal."²⁷ He goes on to say that it was only after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that faith was initiated. Only after the "end" of the historical Jesus was faith evoked. It was only this Jesus who was capable of arousing faith, and it was this

²⁵Whereas English has only the one term "history," the German language has two terms "Historie" and "Geschichte." In common use there is no distinction between these terms, but many theological scholars since Kähler have appreciated the availability of the two terms which could be used to indicate two important aspects of historical thinking.

²⁶It must be remembered that Kähler did not separate the historical Jesus from the kerygma. For Kähler there was a direct continuity between the historical figure of Jesus and the Christ of the New Testament proclamation. He said that the "historische Jesus" of the Leben-Jesu-Forschung scholars was not the "real" Jesus, but that the real Jesus was the "geschichtliche Jesus" or the preached Christ. He made no distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. Cf. Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, Philadelphia, 1966, pp. 60-2.

²⁷Martin Kähler, The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 65.

risen Jesus who was the preached Christ.²⁸ Hugh Anderson points out that Kähler's emphasis on the historicity (Geschichtlichkeit) of Jesus was not associated so much with the actuality of past events as with his impact upon posterity; and with his stress on the preached Christ as the only true Christ, Kähler opened the way for a neglect of the historical Jesus in favor of the Christ of the kerygma.²⁹

Bultmann clearly has made use of Kähler's distinction between Historie and Geschichte to indicate what he calls two kinds of historical reality. Bultmann's distinction between these two terms can be seen in his treatment of the cross of Jesus.³⁰ In one sense, Jesus' death is historisch, i.e., he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in Palestine on a particular occasion in time past; but his death is also geschichtlich in the sense that this event is of decisive importance today.³¹ While faith is always in response to the geschichtlich event, i.e., the event in the present, this present event had its origin in the unique happening in the past. Bultmann accepts that an historisch approach to history is an impartial one removed from a personal involvement; however, this approach to man is not capable of grasping man's true significance or properly understanding his action. An historisch approach to the past is important and necessary; but it has its limitations and must give way to other

²⁸Ibid., p. 66

²⁹Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, New York, 1964, p. 28.

³⁰N. J. Young points out that Bultmann does not normally use the terms Historie and Geschichte, but most often he uses historisch and geschichtlich. These terms indicate two different methods of approach that may be used on the same history. Young, op. cit., p. 23.

³¹Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 37.

categories which are more in keeping with man's true nature. It is therefore only when the historian uses the geschichtlich approach to man that man is properly understood and the goal of history--to set forth genuine possibilities from the past for a true self-understanding--is achieved. This does not mean that the historisch approach can be eliminated from Bultmann's theology; in fact, the geschichtlich approach to man is inseparable from the historisch. Genuine possibilities of self-understanding are open to man only because they are gleaned from the actual historical past--the meaning and significance of the past are derived from the past itself in relation to the present, and for this reason the reconstruction of the past is necessary to point to the possibilities of human self-understanding. Interpretations are only based on actual facts. The past is what gives rise to the possibilities of the present and the future.³²

For Bultmann, the task of the historian includes a reconstruction of the past; but it cannot be reduced simply to that. According to Bultmann, the value of the historisch approach is that it:

. . . consists in criticism of the tradition in which the historian himself stands at any particular time and through which he must cut a clear view to the text and the concepts used in it.³³

The barrenness of this approach, however, can be demonstrated from its application to the historical Jesus. Such historical research as that used in the Leben-Jesu-Forschung can never lead to any positive result which could serve as a basis for faith. This kind of research

³²This argument is based on the principle of analogy which will be discussed in Chapter V. Because the unique is not present in the universe and there is a constant uniformity of nature, then the only possibilities for the future must be gleaned from the past. For Bultmann, a possibility for self-understanding which does not conform to the possibilities of the past is not really a possibility at all. Cf. Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, op. cit., pp. 156-9.

³³Ibid., p. 155n.

is always based on a limited amount of knowledge; and it is always seen from the perspective of the historian, whether it be materialistic, idealistic, or otherwise. Because of this, such knowledge is always of relative value and its results have only relative validity. This can certainly be illustrated by the "Life of Jesus" research carried on by liberal theology of the last century.³⁴ The purpose of doing history, then, is not simply to reconstruct past happenings, but to interpret them in such a way that they have meaning for man in his present existence. This is why the notion of history must be broadened to include meaning for modern man. This "broadening" comes when history is interpreted in categories relative to man himself and not to nature. R. H. Fuller understands Bultmann's use of these two terms properly when he writes:

By historisch Bultmann means that which can be established by the historian's criticism of the past; by geschichtlich he means that which, although occurring in past history, has a vital existential reference to our life today.³⁵

III. HISTORY AND EXISTENTIALISM

Recognizing the importance of interpreting history in terms of human categories, Bultmann has chosen an existentialist³⁶ interpretation as the one which is most capable of understanding man's past

³⁴Ibid., pp. 30-1.

³⁵Reginald H. Fuller, "Translator's Preface," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, xii.

³⁶Once again a problem of definition arises. In German there are two words for the English equivalent of "existential." Bultmann uses the German word "existential" to refer to the methods and/or categories of existential philosophy, and this word is best translated in English by "existentialist." On the other hand, Bultmann uses the other German word "existentiell" to refer to one's own human existence, and it should be translated in English as "existential." "Existentialist" speaks about the ways of describing man's existence

achievements.³⁷ What is existentialism? John Macquarrie has defined existentialism not as a set of doctrines, but as a way of doing philosophy which begins by questioning human existence. "Existence" is understood as the kind of being that belongs to man in his concrete living, acting and deciding.³⁸ The peculiarity of being in human existence is that it is not fixed, as in nature, but is on the way, always standing before possibilities of existence.³⁹

The relationship of existentialism to history then is clear. The subject of history is man, and historical reflection is essentially about human existence in the world. And thus Bultmann writes, ". . . the ultimate purpose in the study of history is to realize consciously the possibilities it affords for the understanding of human existence."⁴⁰ Since man is incapable of being understood adequately through nature, then a category appropriate to man himself is necessary. That category, according to existentialist philosophers, is human existence; and therefore a proper approach to history

whereas "existential" refers to the actual existence itself. It is not surprising that both Bultmann's friends and critics alike have often confused the meaning of these two terms, but it is probably true that the fault lies with Bultmann himself because his writings are not always clear at this point. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "Bultmann Replies to His Critics," *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 202-3; Rudolf Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, trans. by J. C. G. Greig, London, 1966, pp. 258-9. Also unclear is Bultmann's use of *Geschichlichkeit*. Is this the same as *existentiell*, or is it to be further distinguished? Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "History and Eschatology in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies*, 1:13, 1954-5.

³⁷Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *op. cit.*, pp. 15-ff.

³⁸John Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, London, 1971, p. 354.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Bultmann, "Bultmann Replies to His Critics," *op. cit.*, p. 192.

is an existential one which attempts in its historical reflection to provide a possibility for understanding human existence.⁴¹ In this historical reflection, the historian participates in the object of his reflection. Although a major part of the task of the historian is to reconstruct the past actions of man, he must not stop there but must go further. Because he is investigating an action, ". . . his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent."⁴² In this way the historian is in an existential relationship between himself and the events he tries to understand. In this sense there is a necessity for self-understanding in all historical inquiry; indeed, the goal of such inquiry is to provide possibilities for self-understanding. Although one may study a particular segment of history simply out of curiosity, this is not what history is all about. Since history has to do with human action, it is reasonable to conclude that the function of history is to lead to self-understanding.⁴³

Historical reflection is concerned with a possibility of self-understanding, and the clues to the possibilities open to man are gleaned only from the past.⁴⁴ For this reason historical reflection cannot take place apart from the historical reality of the past.⁴⁵ Historical reflection therefore must be closely connected with the historical method which will be described in Chapter Five. Real

⁴¹John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, London, 1955, pp. 81-8.

⁴²R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford, 1946, p. 215.

⁴³Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 87.

⁴⁴Rudolf Bultmann, "Reply," The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, ed. by Charles W. Kegley, London, 1966, p. 275.

⁴⁵Ibid.

possibilities can only arise out of that which has actually happened, and how else can this be determined except through the rigid application of the historical method to the past? The historian's ultimate task is to set forth possibilities for human self-understanding, and such possibilities are only real ones if they are grounded firmly in the past.⁴⁶ Bultmann strongly urges that these two aspects of history are not mutually contradictory, but speak of one reality including both the factualness of history (historisch) and its meaning and interpretation (geschichtlich).⁴⁷ For Bultmann, as mentioned in the preceding section, it is important that an existentialist interpretation of history has need of an objectifying view of the historical past.⁴⁸ In fact, Bultmann strongly states, "There is no existentialist interpretation of history at all which ignores the factual occurrence."⁴⁹

It is also very important to Bultmann that a proper interpretation of an event or subject is always related to and governed by a "pre-understanding"⁵⁰ of the subject. When the historian examines a text, he asks certain questions of it thereby presupposing a certain understanding of the subject of the text prior to the investigation. The way the questions which are put to the text are phrased is based on the historian's "pre-understanding" (Vorverständnis) of the subject. Bultmann says this prior-understanding ". . . is the presupposition of all interpretations seeking an understanding of the

⁴⁶Macquarrie, op. cit., pp. 87-9.

⁴⁷Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing," op. cit., pp. 38-9.

⁴⁸Ibid. ⁴⁹Bultmann, "Reply," loc. cit.

⁵⁰Or "prior-understanding" translated from the German Vorverständnis.

text . . . , " and this understanding (or interest) which is based in the life of the interpreter is also ". . . in some way or other alive in the text which is to be interpreted, and forms the link between the text and the expositor."⁵¹ This presupposition for understanding a text, according to Bultmann, ". . . is the interpreter's relationship in his life to the subject which is directly or indirectly expressed in the text."⁵²

For Bultmann, one of the main values of existential philosophy is that this "pre-understanding"--which is basically the understanding of one's own existence--is given conceptual clarity. It is for this reason that Bultmann uses the existential concepts found in Martin Heidegger's Being and Time.⁵³ Existential philosophy therefore is important to Bultmann because it helps him to speak about human existence. It does not say how one is to exist, but only that one must exist, and what it means to exist.⁵⁴ Bultmann says that it is the problem of language which has motivated his theology. "Theology," according to Rudolf Bultmann, "is basically the thinking and speaking of faith, and for this philosophy is required."⁵⁵ Christian faith speaks of a specific kind of understanding in rational cate-

⁵¹Bultmann, Essays: Philosophical and Theological, op. cit., p. 240.

⁵²Ibid., p. 241.

⁵³Cf. Bultmann, "Reply," op. cit., p. 274. Although Vorverständnis is an important theme in Bultmann's theology, it is not sufficiently important for the purposes of this thesis to pursue the subject here. An important essay which treats what Bultmann means by Vorverständnis is his "The Problem of Hermeneutics," Essays: Philosophical and Theological, op. cit., pp. 234-61.

⁵⁴Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, London, 1966, p. 55.

⁵⁵Bultmann, "Reply," op. cit., p. 276.

gories of thinking and speaking. The benefit of existential philosophy to Bultmann is that it helps him to "speak" of Christian faith in a manner which can be understood by modern man. Bultmann, however, does not wish to set aside the "scandal" of the Gospel by making it "relevant" and "acceptable;" he is simply trying to clarify what Christian faith is speaking about in terms which can be understood by modern man.⁵⁶ This, however, will be discussed more completely under the section on "Demythologizing." Bultmann is not inseparably bound to existentialism and has no intention of making existentialism a permanent part of theology. He simply employs it to help him make Christian faith understandable.⁵⁷

Using the conceptuality of existential philosophy, Bultmann distinguishes between man's being as "existence" and the being of all worldly beings which are not existing, but are only "existent." He calls the former Dasein and the latter Vorhandensein. Dasein is the category which is used to specify human Being in responsible decisions. It is opposite Geworfenheit ("thrownness") in the sense that Dasein refers to a man who is confronted with the possibilities of existence and who is capable of deciding the kind of existence he will have. Vorhandensein is not typically human existence, but is seen in the being which is dominated by the forces of nature and not by the act of decision. Though man may live in a state of indecision with regard to the possibilities which confront him--or may be determined by causal necessity, this is not real human existence. Allowing one's conduct to be molded by a pattern of life is to avoid

⁵⁶Rudolf Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologizing," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, London, 1962, II, 182-3.

⁵⁷Bultmann, "Rudolf Bultmann Replies to His Critics," op. cit., p. 193.

decision and to accept Vorhandensein. True human existence (Dasein), on the other hand, is found only in the act of existing, i.e., being a responsible human being and deciding among the possibilities in the present.⁵⁸ Van A. Harvey draws attention to the fact that for Bultmann, man's basic problem is not what he believes, but how he responds, whether authentically or inauthentically.⁵⁹

Although he makes considerable use of existential philosophy (especially that of Martin Heidegger) in his theological endeavors, Bultmann takes exception to Heidegger on a very important issue. Is man free and capable on his own to make decisions for "authentic existence"? The existential philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, say "yes"; but Bultmann denies man's possibility for authentic existence apart from faith in Christ. Real freedom, as will be shown later, is available only as a gift from God when man surrenders his will and responds by obedience to the demands made upon him in the preaching of the Word of God.

The existentialists cannot accept the finality or absoluteness of Christianity and its claims, and it is here that Bultmann parts company with existentialism. For Bultmann, authentic existence is found only in the preaching of the cross. The Christian message is the final and absolute way toward authentic Being.⁶⁰

What Bultmann openly admits is his use of existentialist categories to speak about theology. Existential philosophy has

⁵⁸Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., pp. 55-7, and "On the Problem of Demythologizing," op. cit., pp. 37-8.

⁵⁹Van Austin Harvey, The Historian and the Believer, London, 1967, p. 141.

⁶⁰This is clearly seen in Bultmann's response to Karl Jaspers' criticisms in "The Case for Demythologizing," op. cit., pp. 192-3.

taught him how to speak his theology; and he believes it has also enabled him to present clearly the message of the cross, making clear what is the true "skandalon" of the Gospel, to modern man. Bultmann has accepted existential philosophy as the best way to speak about God to modern man; however, the manner of speaking should not be confused with the message. The Christian message is derived from the New Testament itself.

In this section the writer has sought to clarify Bultmann's use of existential philosophy and how it relates to history, as well as where Bultmann takes exception to that philosophy. In the following section the task will be to show where Bultmann distinguishes his understanding of history from another which, in the past and even to an extent in the present, has reduced Christianity to relativism.

IV. HISTORY AND RELATIVISM

Although the modern understanding of history has played a significant role in Bultmann's historical and theological understanding, there are some important differences between his view and the one held by the nineteenth-century positivists and expressed in the liberal theologies of Ernst Troeltsch and Adolf von Harnack. He condemned what he calls "historicism" and its logical conclusion, relativism. The "historicist," according to Bultmann, understands history by analogy with nature. He was involved almost exclusively in the task of establishing the facts of the past and finding out the laws of their connection.⁶¹ Historicism became popular with the positivists who tried to eliminate the subjectivity of the historian

⁶¹Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology, Edinburgh, 1957, p. 78.

by avoiding every value judgment. According to Bultmann, historiography became purely a science of facts, ". . . but it did not ask what a historical fact is."⁶² Meaning in history, or the meaning of history, was lost in the rush to establish the facts and their causal connections. History was swallowed up by naturalism, and the historiographers were primarily interested in knowing the causal connections of events. Bultmann argues that the result of this procedure--examining history by analogy with nature--was to bring historiography to the threshold of relativism. This form of historical thinking acknowledged change as historical law and ". . . denied the absolute value of judgments and knowledge, and it confirmed the dependence of all thinking and valuing on their time and culture."⁶³

In theology the effects of this historicism became apparent in the "Life of Jesus" research (Leben-Jesu-Forschung). The life and work of Jesus were described as being of the same order of events as all other events, and therefore no distinctive claim could be made for or about Christianity. It was no longer "final" or absolute. Christianity could be final "for us" now because there is nothing else, but other ethnic groups of another part of the earth experience the divine in other ways. Christianity then came to be understood in light of the history and development of religious thought. The "history of religion" (Religionsgeschichte) school of theology began to describe Christianity in terms of social psychology and of the development of religious thought in all peoples, thereby reducing it to simply a way of talking about God.

Bultmann has consistently denounced relativism and very early in his theological career concluded that historical inquiry did not

⁶²Ibid. ⁶³Ibid.

have to end in a relativism in which the historical picture was surrendered to the subjectivity of the observer.⁶⁴

It should be noted here that some of the strongest criticisms against Bultmann from other existential theologians have stemmed from his denunciation of historicism and relativism. John Macquarrie argues that the "backbone" of existentialism is rooted in the historical method; and should the unique or the absolute be found in history, then existentialism must be set aside.⁶⁵ He is disappointed that Barth and Bultmann have reacted against the broadening influence of the historical approach to Christianity and have revived the idea of exclusiveness, uniqueness, and finality in Christianity once again.⁶⁶ In another work, Macquarrie saves his final criticism of Bultmann for his view of the exclusiveness of the Christian Gospel and its finality.⁶⁷

Bultmann has frequently argued that the Christian kerygma cannot be separated from a "final" or "absolute" act of God in the historical person of Jesus; and he also holds that only through the Christian kerygma, which is inseparably bound to God's act in Jesus on the cross, is there any possibility of authentic existence. Van Harvey takes exception to Bultmann here also. He asks:

. . . if authenticity is only made possible "in fact" in Jesus of Nazareth, what is this but to say that faith was never really an existential possibility at all for those who have not heard the Christian proclamation? How could they be held responsible,

⁶⁴Bultmann, Jesus, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶⁵Macquarrie, Twentieth Century Religious Thought, op. cit., pp. 141-4, 351-ff.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 352-3.

⁶⁷John Macquarrie, "Theology and Philosophy in Rudolf Bultmann's Thought," The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, ed. by Charles W. Kegley, London, 1966, pp. 142-3.

or viewed as fallen, if there was nothing they could respond to, or against which they decided and fell?⁶⁸

It might be added here in response to Macquarrie and Harvey that whether or not Bultmann is logical at this point or even "right," he certainly does justice to the biblical notion of the finality of the cross. He is also right to conclude that the relativism (such as that called for by Macquarrie and Harvey) ultimately leads to nihilism.⁶⁹

Bultmann is careful not to deny the presence of relativity in history; indeed, he agrees that there is an element of relativity in each present moment, but this is not relativity:

. . . in the sense in which any particular point within a causal series is a relative one, but /it/ has the positive sense that the present is the moment of decision, and by the decision taken the yield of the past is gathered in and the meaning of the future is chosen. This is the character of every historical situation; in it the problem and the meaning of the past and future are enclosed and are waiting, as it were, to be unveiled by human decisions.⁷⁰

For Bultmann, the relativity of every historical situation is understood as having a positive meaning which does not result in a negative relativism or nihilism. The relativity of the historical situation has to do with the way man responds in the light of the past and for the future, whether authentically or inauthentically. The unity of the past and the future is not found in a causal connection of events, nor in a progress developing by logical necessity, but by the decisions of individuals.⁷¹ The relativity here is always found in the individual because of the different choices he may take in light of the future possibilities presented to him by the past.

⁶⁸Harvey, op. cit., pp. 145-6.

⁶⁹Bultmann, History and Eschatology, op. cit., p. 135.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 141-2. ⁷¹Ibid.

Bultmann strongly argues the point that even though there may exist different possibilities of self-understanding, it does not thereby follow that they are all equally right.⁷² For Bultmann, a person's world-view (Weltanschauung) may well lead him astray into an inadequate self-understanding.⁷³ In fact, Bultmann argues that Christian faith believes that man cannot make, or does not have the freedom to make, historical decisions. This freedom comes through submission by faith to the demands of the Christian kerygma, and only there.⁷⁴ The freedom one needs in order to decide for authentic existence and to make authentic historical decisions is found only when a man finds freedom from himself, i.e., as a man loses himself, he finds himself (Mark 8:35-36); and, moreover, it is a radical freedom received only as a gift through the act of faith.

Bultmann's objections to historicism, then, are quite clear: he objected to its lack of understanding of the nature of human being, its willingness to interpret history in terms of causal necessity rather than the more appropriate category of openness to the future, and its emphasis upon relativism which Bultmann believes leads to nihilism. Another important objection to historicism is its understanding of the future; however, that will be discussed separately in the following section on Bultmann's understanding of history and eschatology.

V. HISTORY AND ESCHATOLOGY

Another weakness of historicism according to Bultmann is its failure to understand the role of the future in history. When the historian considers human actions, he must take into account the pur-

⁷²Ibid., p. 148. ⁷³Ibid. ⁷⁴Ibid., p. 150.

poses and intentions which lead man to make his decisions. Human life is always directed towards the future. Man is never content with the present; but his intentions, expectations and hopes are always directed toward the future. Bultmann says that this means that man's life is always before him and is always to be apprehended, to be realized.⁷⁵ He states:

Man is always on the way; each present hour is questioned and challenged by its future. That means at the same time that the real essence of all that man does and undertakes in his present becomes revealed only in the future as important or vain, as fulfillment or failure. All actions are risks.⁷⁶

Historicism did not see that the past poses questions in the present about which one must decide for the future, e.g., the cross posed a question to the disciples regarding the person and message of Jesus. Man must decide how the past will affect his future. Therefore the present always has before it an "eschatological possibility" for which one must decide. The past does not have only one meaning, but often is ambiguous; and therefore the future is open to man in his present situation. Historicism, according to Bultmann, misunderstands the future, thinking that it is determined by the past through laws of necessity rather than being open to the decisions of the present.⁷⁷

In a reply to a criticism by Paul Minear of Bultmann's view of history, Bultmann admitted that history could be pictured as a series of cause and effect events but argued that:

The causality in this chain is not absolute, but only a relative determination, because the will and action of men proceed out of their own decisions. These decisions are always conditioned, yet always free--conditioned in so far as they are always grounded in situations which are simply given; free, however, in so far as man is at any time free to decide what he will allow to be the basis for his willing and acting, unless, of course one

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 140. ⁷⁶Ibid. ⁷⁷Ibid., p. 141.

understands history from the standpoint of a thorough-going materialism.⁷⁸

Bultmann realizes that the future is limited somewhat by the past, but that the future is open ". . . in so far as it brings the gain or loss of our genuine life and thereby gives to our present its character as moment of decision."⁷⁹ The past reveals the possibilities for the future, and in that sense the past is limiting; however, the past does not determine the choices or decisions one must make over against the past and for the future.

Bultmann appeals to the New Testament as the source of his understanding of the relation of history to eschatology. In the New Testament Jesus himself and the earliest community of Christians believed that the end of history was near and that a new aeon was about to begin. The early Church believed it was in the "last days" and that it was endowed with the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit. The same apocalyptic view was also held later in the Hellenistic-Christian communities (I Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:3). This teaching can be found throughout the New Testament and especially in the warnings to Christians to persevere in the face of persecution because the end was near (Matt. 25:1-13; Rev. 3:3).⁸⁰

The Parousia, however, did not come, and soon the disappointment became apparent and widespread. In the Johannine Epistles, Bultmann argues, the notion of the Parousia was abandoned. In the Pastorals and Acts the time between the resurrection of Christ and his Parousia--originally thought to be a very short time--was lengthened indefinitely. Traditional eschatology was abandoned

⁷⁸Bultmann, "Reply," *op. cit.*, p. 267. ⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Bultmann, "History and Eschatology in the New Testament," *op. cit.*, p. 9.

together with its appeal to Old Testament history, but faith in the Creator-God remained.

According to Bultmann, this change which came in the understanding of Christian eschatology was that (contrary to the earliest community of believers) Christians of succeeding decades and generations no longer expected an imminent end of history; but, as became clear in the theology of Paul and later of John, they came to hold that history is swallowed up in eschatology.⁸¹ Paul, though still guided by the Old Testament view that history has a meaning found in divine guidance toward a certain goal, modified significantly apocalyptic eschatology. History for Paul was no longer simply the history of Israel, but the history of the whole world even though Israel was still at the centre of it. Paul regarded the history of Israel as a totality, as a uniform history of human sin. Israel's sin of disobedience was seen paradoxically in her efforts to attain righteousness in her own strength through the law (Rom. 9:31; 10:2-ff.). For Paul, true salvation is righteousness and consequently freedom, i.e., "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:7). Salvation is also the salvation of the individual who is a new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). Christ then becomes in Paul's theology the end of the law as well as--and at the same time--the end of history.⁸²

In Paul history will not cease but will be swallowed up by eschatology. Eschatology has lost its sense as the goal of history and is now understood as the goal of the individual human being.⁸³ From this perspective, the history of the past comes to be the type

⁸¹Ibid., p. 10. ⁸²Ibid., p. 13. ⁸³Ibid.

of history of the man who is set free from sin and death for new life under grace (Rom. 6:14). The history of Israel as a nation and the history of the world lose their interest and the true historical life (Geschichtlichkeit) of the human being emerges. The decisive history, then, is no longer that of the world, but that of the individual which he himself experiences. In this history, the encounter with Christ is the decisive event by which the individual not only begins to exist historically, but at the same time eschatologically.⁸⁴

Bultmann claims that, according to Paul, a true historical life is not possible until man can live in "real freedom" from himself and his past, and this is a gift of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ It is the free man who is subjected to the imperative of the divine demand. The dialectic of this freedom of man is life in the indicative and the imperative as described in Romans 6:12-23. This dialectic also indicates the "historicity" (Geschichtlichkeit) of the Christian life by virtue of the struggle taking place in man between the flesh and the spirit (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 8:12-ff.). With this gift of the Holy Spirit, the life of freedom has become a possibility; and the old aeon has reached its end (II Cor. 5:17). Christ has become the end of history, and the believer does not belong to this "old world" any longer, though he still lives within it.⁸⁶

The problem of eschatology in the early Christian community, i.e., the non-appearance of the Parousia, has been solved in Paul and later in John. For them Christ is ever present or ever becoming the present eschatological event. The present takes on an eschatological character through an encounter with Christ or the Word which proclaims him. In this encounter with Christ in the present (the

⁸⁴Ibid. ⁸⁵Ibid. ⁸⁶Ibid.

"now"), the world and its history come to an end and the believer becomes free.⁸⁷ Christ is not therefore an eschatological figure of the past, but of the present who is encountered through the preaching of the Word and participation in the sacraments.⁸⁸

W. Künneth raises a strong criticism against Bultmann at this point arguing that Bultmann's concept of revelation is distorted due to its one-sidedness. He believes that Bultmann's emphasis upon the present with little regard to the past is improperly placed.

Revelation is not in fact simply "address" in actu, not simply the proclaimed word of promised resurrection life, but also, and indeed fundamentally, information about a fact, the message of a completed act of salvation, of the past perfect of the resurrection of Jesus.⁸⁹

For Bultmann, the paradox of history and its relation to eschatology is ". . . that the eschatological event has happened in history and happens everywhere in preaching."⁹⁰ The true understanding of Christian eschatology therefore is not that history comes to an end--as originally believed, but that ". . . history is swallowed up in eschatology."⁹¹ The meaning of history always lies in its present and not in its past. When the present is conceived of as an eschatological present by means of Christian faith, then the meaning of history is realized. This meaning is not seen from "outside" of history, but only in the individual's present and only in his responsible decisions.⁹²

In the above exposition of Bultmann's understanding of the relation of history to eschatology, one is repeatedly confused by his

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 15. ⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 15-6.

⁸⁹Walter Künneth, The Theology of the Resurrection, London, 1965, p. 45.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 16. ⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Bultmann, History and Eschatology, op. cit., p. 155.

use of the words "history" and "eschatology." Beginning with the latter, Bultmann does not use the word "eschatology" in its most usual sense, i.e., to indicate the future or the end of world history. For Bultmann, eschatology has broken into the present, and every moment has the possibility of becoming an eschatological one.⁹³ By this he is actually speaking about the transcendence of God in world history. The transcendence of God in this world is spoken of in the New Testament as a future event, and it is because this transcendence of God takes place now in the response of faith to Christian preaching that Bultmann speaks of this as an eschatological "event." "History" is also a very confusing term in Bultmann's vocabulary. He often substitutes personal history for world history and then interchanges the two so that one is frequently at a loss to understand him or the distinction he makes. Actually, it is the personal history of the individual, signifying his personal past, which comes to an end by faith in Christ. All of this takes place now within the stream of world history, and this is why Bultmann can speak about history coming to an end on the one hand and the eschatological event within history on the other. God comes to man and meets him in his present situation (world history), and in this present God confronts him with the Gospel which demands faith and obedience. Man's response to this proclamation makes of that moment an eschatological event. At that moment man is free from his past (personal history), and history (personal past) has come to an end. From this moment man lives in the world though he is not of the world. The old has passed and the new has come (II Cor. 5:17). It is only one dimension of a two-fold dimension of history which has come to an end. For Bultmann, the

⁹³Ibid.

eschatological event occurs in the dimension of personal history bringing an end to one's old self and opening the way to the new, but it does not bring world history to a close at the same time. Therefore, the eschatological event which ends history (personal) also occurs within history (world). The world which ends is man's personal past, and the one which begins (a new aeon) is personal existence (Geschichtlichkeit). For Bultmann, the eschatological event transcends history but is at the same time related to it, indeed, is bound to it. It cannot, however, be identified by historical (historisch) inquiry into the past; but it occurs only in the present as Christ is proclaimed and an existential response is given.⁹⁴

VI. THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY AND MYTH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Bultmann's well-known essay, "New Testament and Mythology,"⁹⁵ began, or at least initiated into the current theological arena, the present discussion of the problem of myth in the New Testament and its subsequent debate. He begins his essay by describing the cosmology (or world-view) of the New Testament. The New Testament understands the world to be a three-storied structure. The upper story (heaven) is inhabited by God and celestial beings--angels. The middle story is the earth inhabited by man, and the lower story is the place of torment--hell--prepared for Satan and his angels. The earth in the middle becomes the battleground for the supernatural activity of God on the one hand and of the devil and his angels on the other. History in the New Testament does not follow a smooth and

⁹⁴Young, op. cit., pp. 32-3.

⁹⁵Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., pp. 1-44.

unbroken course, but is set in motion and governed by supernatural intervention. The end of history will come when Satan, sin, and death have been put down for good and the dead have been raised to either eternal salvation or eternal punishment.⁹⁶

This picture of the cosmology of the New Testament which involves an acceptance of such things as supernatural interventions in the course of history, by either divine or satanic beings, and the violations of natural law (miracles), is what Bultmann calls a mythological world view, unacceptable to modern man today.

Moreover, this mythical world view was held by Jesus when he proclaimed the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. According to Bultmann:

Jesus envisaged the inauguration of the Kingdom of God as a tremendous cosmic drama. The Son of Man will come with the clouds of heaven, the dead will be raised and the day of judgment will arrive; for the righteous the time of bliss will begin, whereas the damned will be delivered to the torments of Hell.⁹⁷

The early Christian believers also held to the same or a similar world view and concept of the Kingdom of God as did Jesus; and they anticipated the coming of the Kingdom of God in the immediate future, although they waited in vain. The hope of Jesus and of the early community of believers was not fulfilled, and the same world still continues today. For Bultmann, this mythical world view has been refuted by history. The conception of the world in the preaching of Jesus, i.e., a three-storied universe, the intervention of supernatural powers, the notion of miracles, evil spirits, angels, etc., is a mythological conception of the world because it is contrary to

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁹⁷Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 13.

the modern world view developed by science.⁹⁸ The biblical writers try to "objectify" God through his deeds in history such as the stilling of a storm or the healing of a blind man, etc. Modern man rejects all such phenomena and calls it mythology, for he can neither observe nor experience such things today. Modern man does not know of a course of nature "perforated" by supernatural powers; and he therefore finds the message of the New Testament, which is bound up with such a mythical view of the universe, to be both unintelligible and unacceptable. Speaking about the large degree to which this mythical view of the universe is intermingled with the New Testament message, Bultmann writes, "To this extent the kerygma is incredible to modern man, for he is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete."⁹⁹

For Bultmann, the acceptance of such a world view as that entertained by the writers of the New Testament and of Jesus himself would involve not only a sacrifice of the intellect, but also it would mean the acceptance of ". . . a view of the world in our faith and religion which we should deny in our every day life."¹⁰⁰ Bultmann goes even further and argues:

It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.¹⁰¹

In modern science whence the modern world view (Weltanschauung) has sprung, the intervention of God or of the devil is not taken into consideration because such a consideration would involve an interrup-

⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 13-5.

⁹⁹Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 4. ¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 5.

tion of history, i.e., a "bolt from the blue." Basic to this modern "world view" of the universe is the cause-and-effect nexus, i.e., a closed causal nexus. Bultmann argues that just as modern science cannot accept any interruption of nature by some supernatural powers, so also a modern study of history does not take into account any intervention of God or the devil in the course of history.¹⁰² A primitive world-view of the universe is not available to modern man today because he can neither experience such occurrences nor understand them; he is only puzzled by them.

When modern man examines the New Testament, he finds that the biblical writers convey a primitive Weltanschauung, as described above, which he cannot accept and consequently must reject. How can he accept such ideas as a blood atonement--one man dying for the sins of the whole world--or even yet, a resurrection from the dead?¹⁰³ If he is to be consistent as a rationally motivated human being who lives in a scientific age, modern man must reject such notions in their entirety.¹⁰⁴

In light of the above, what can the New Testament say to modern man? Is the Christian message relevant to him? At first it appears that there are only two possible courses: either to reject Christianity as a whole, or to reject only the mythical statements found in the New Testament, thereby reducing the Christian message to certain ethical teachings of Jesus. Bultmann calls the latter a reduction of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God to the so-called

¹⁰²Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁰³Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., pp. 4-9.

¹⁰⁴One wonders whether, on the basis of this modern world view which Bultmann accepts and uses to determine what is mythical in the New Testament, it is possible to speak of God at all.

social gospel.¹⁰⁵ He rejects both of these options,¹⁰⁶ and he instead chooses a third. He asks whether the mythology of the New Testament has a ". . . deeper meaning which is concealed under the cover of mythology . . ."¹⁰⁷ which has relevance to modern man. Bultmann is convinced that the eschatological preaching and the mythological sayings of the New Testament do have a "deeper meaning" which is concealed by the primitive world-view but which must be made understandable and relevant to modern man through a process of interpretation which he calls demythologizing. Bultmann contends that this process of demythologizing is simply a hermeneutical process or method which seeks to extricate the real message of the New Testament from the myth which clothes it. He clearly contends, "If the truth of the New Testament proclamation is to be preserved, the only way is to demythologize it."¹⁰⁸ This process will become more clear after a discussion of Bultmann's definition of myth.

VII. THE MEANING AND INTERPRETATION OF MYTH

The above discussion has given several examples of myth and the kinds of things Bultmann would call myth, but the question remains: what is "myth"? There does not appear to be any consensus of opinion among scholars on what myth is.¹⁰⁹ Since it is very important to know what Bultmann means by it before one can understand

¹⁰⁵Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., pp. 17-8.

¹⁰⁶He does not believe that the acceptance of the world view expressed in New Testament mythology is a possibility for modern man.

¹⁰⁷Bultmann, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁰⁸Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁰⁹Hordern, op. cit., p. 29.

his demythologizing hermeneutic, the following discussion will focus on Bultmann's definition of myth and how he views its "real" purpose in the New Testament.

Myth, according to Bultmann, is a form of expression in which man, not yet awakened to reason, expresses his understanding of the world and of himself. It expresses man's belief that the origin and purpose of the world in which he lives is to be sought beyond it, i.e., beyond the realm of that which is tangible, and that this realm is dominated by mysterious powers.¹¹⁰ "Myth is . . . an expression of man's awareness that he is not lord of his own being."¹¹¹ This myth expresses man's dependence upon those powers which dominate the world in which he lives as well as his belief that his dependence upon such powers can help deliver him from the forces visible in this world. For Bultmann, then, the purpose of myth is to ". . . speak of a transcendent power which controls the world and man, but that purpose is impeded and obscured by the terms in which it is expressed."¹¹² He claims that it is characteristic of "original myth," that in it both empirical and existential reality are combined, and therefore it is the task of the theologian to distinguish them.¹¹³ Bultmann contends that it is possible to speak about this understanding of human existence apart from the obscure mythological terms which conceal it, and that the New Testament kerygma--which he takes to be a kerygma about an understanding of human existence--is not bound to the myth which contains it. He is convinced that Christian faith--and its understanding of human existence--should not be tied down to the

¹¹⁰Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 10-1.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 11. ¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologizing," op. cit., p. 185.



imagery of New Testament mythology.¹¹⁴

The real purpose of myth therefore is not to try to present an objective picture of the world, but ". . . to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives."¹¹⁵ H. W. Bartsch is right when he claims that when Bultmann translates the New Testament into existentialist terms he believes he ". . . is achieving the same goal as the original witnesses did, though perhaps in a way which is not immediately obvious."¹¹⁶ Because of this, myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but in terms of man's understanding of his own existence, that is, existentially. Myth should not therefore be interpreted simply on the basis of what it says, but what it intends. Bultmann holds that the New Testament writers were concerned with appropriating and describing a new mode of existence; and for this reason, as Van Harvey points out, it is possible to translate the Gospel existentially.¹¹⁷ Bornkamm says Bultmann's demythologizing requires an existential interpretation of myth which would inquire: How does man understand himself in such mythical expressions or what ideas of human existence are contained within such expressions?¹¹⁸ If this procedure is followed, then those mythical elements of the New Testament which offer only a puzzle to modern man can be made understandable and relevant.

¹¹⁴Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," loc. cit.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Hans-Werner Bartsch, "Bultmann and Jaspers," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, London, 1962, II, 201.

¹¹⁷Harvey, op. cit., pp. 140-1.

¹¹⁸Gunther Bornkamm, "Myth and Gospel: A Discussion of the Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament," The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, ed. by C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville, Philadelphia, 1964, p. 174.

The word "demythologize" is an unfortunate word to describe the above procedure of interpretation, and even Bultmann admits that the word does not really describe what he is trying to do.¹¹⁹ To "de-mythologize" appears to mean that one should eliminate the myth of the New Testament, but by it Bultmann means not to eliminate but to interpret the myth. This process of interpretation strips the myth of its "old world view" and places it in a modern setting commensurate with its "intended" purpose. Some examples of demythologizing which Bultmann gives will help to clarify his method of interpretation. He claims that myths give worldly objectivity to that which is unworldly, and he illustrates this by using the mythical notion in the Bible that God has his domicile in heaven. The meaning of such a statement is found in the idea that God is beyond the world, ". . . that He is transcendent."¹²⁰ Because the thinking of that day was not geared to thinking in terms of transcendence, the biblical writers conceived of the transcendent God in terms of spatial distance, i.e., above the earth. Hell expresses an idea of the transcendence of evil as a tremendous power which affects mankind, and therefore the location of hell is beneath the earth because that is a place of darkness, and darkness represents that which is terrible to men.¹²¹

For Bultmann the mythical concepts of heaven and hell are no longer acceptable to modern man because the notions of "above" and "below" have no meaning to modern science even though the notions of the transcendence of God and of evil are still significant.¹²² Again,

¹¹⁹Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 18.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 20. ¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²As will be shown in the conclusion to this section, there

the concept of Satan and demonic powers which rule the world is also mythological language, but it does describe an understanding of human existence which has the "insight" that ". . . the evil for which every man is responsible individually has nevertheless become a power which mysteriously enslaves every member of the human race."¹²³

With these examples of myth and demythologizing, Bultmann asks whether it is possible to continue the process and to reinterpret the rest of the New Testament existentially, including the message of Jesus and the preaching of the early Christian community. He not only believes that it is possible, but even necessary to interpret the rest of the New Testament as described above. He argues that such a process is legitimate because there is evidence within the New Testament itself that this kind of demythologizing has already taken place. This can be seen in the development of the eschatological beliefs of the early Christian community, especially in the writings of Paul and John.

The problem of eschatology in the early Church is that Jesus and his followers proclaimed an imminent and cosmic end of history; however, the return of Christ (or Parousia) never came. Paul and John, according to Bultmann, reinterpreted the earliest Christian eschatology and solved its problem by speaking about the presentness

are a number of scholars who believe that Bultmann is inconsistent here in his understanding of mythology. They argue that it is not possible to speak of God in non-mythical terms as Bultmann does. If one is to be consistent, must he also interpret the notion of God himself and his acts in the same way in which the other "mythical" ideas of the New Testament are interpreted? If modern science is the main criterion for understanding what is and what is not myth, then how can Bultmann continue to speak of God as a non-mythical entity? Has modern science discovered God or made it any easier to believe in him?

¹²³Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 20-1.

of the kingdom of God and of Christ.¹²⁴ Although Paul still expected the end of the world to come as a cosmic drama, he nevertheless held that with the resurrection of Christ the decisive eschatological event had already occurred and that the Church is the eschatological community of saints who are already justified and are alive because they are in Christ. The Holy Spirit, who was expected as a gift of the future, has already been given; and by this act the future is already anticipated.¹²⁵ John, on the other hand, went further than Paul and said that the resurrection of Jesus, Pentecost, and the parousia were all the same and that those who believed in Jesus already have that eternal life.¹²⁶ These examples prove to Bultmann at least that the process of demythologizing started in the New Testament itself and that the task of demythologizing today is thereby justified.¹²⁷

That the New Testament contains myth is hardly a matter of debate among New Testament scholars today; but what myth is, how it is to be interpreted, and/or whether it is to be eliminated are questions which continue to be matters of diverse opinion.

It should be mentioned here that not a few scholars disagree with Bultmann's demythologizing enterprise. Julius Schniewind said that, based on Bultmann's definition, it is not possible to dispense

¹²⁴Bultmann rightly does not say that Paul abandoned Jewish apocalyptic eschatology which involved the future coming of the "end" beginning with the coming of Christ, but that Paul did begin to reinterpret that eschatological hope. It was John, according to Bultmann, who "radically" demythologized the early Christian eschatology. Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 32-3.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶John 3:18, 36; 5:25; 11:25-ff. Cf. Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 33-4.

¹²⁷Bultmann, op. cit., p. 34.

with myth because ". . . we can only speak of the invisible in terms of the visible."¹²⁸ Schniewind says that in Christ the invisible God has manifested himself (Col. 1:15), and the other-worldly has been manifested in terms of the this-worldly.¹²⁹ He explains:

After all, is not the Christian claim that the eternal God has come to us in an individual man with all the limitations of time and space essentially mythological in character--i.e., does it not speak of the eternal as if it were involved in time and space, and of the invisible as if it were visible?¹³⁰

Karl Jaspers believes that myth must be retained because of its value as a "cipher" which helps to convey the message of the New Testament. He holds that the myth relates intuitive insights which should not be dispensed with. "The myth is a carrier of meanings which can be expressed only in the language of myth."¹³¹

In strong criticism against Bultmann's demythologizing, Jaspers writes, "To speak of 'demythologizing' is almost blasphemous. Such a depreciation of myth is not enlightenment, but sham enlightenment."¹³² Jaspers does, however, agree with Bultmann that the myth cannot be conceived of as empirical reality:

A corpse cannot come to life and rise from the grave. Stories based on the reports of contradictory witnesses and containing scanty data cannot be regarded as historical facts.¹³³

¹²⁸Julius Schniewind, "A Reply to Bultmann," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 48.

¹²⁹Ibid. ¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Karl Jaspers, "Myth and Religion," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, London, 1962, II, 144.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid., p. 145. Jaspers' essay cannot be summarized here, but he does present a number of criticisms against Bultmann's demythologizing procedure. A more careful look at those criticisms will certainly be beneficial toward an understanding of the problem. Cf. especially pp. 158-ff.

Karl Barth, like Jaspers, also questions the possibility of translating myths into existentialist categories and says that Bultmann's demythologizing of the New Testament has great significance for him; but it is a subsidiary interest which is intended to make room for his existentialist interpretation.¹³⁴ Barth himself, of course, rejects much of this demythologizing enterprise because he does not agree with Bultmann's understanding of myth or his "modern world view."¹³⁵ Schubert M. Ogden, on the other hand, sees Bultmann's demythologization as a direct result of his view that God is "wholly other" than the world, which is a fundamental principle of his theology.¹³⁶ Bultmann's view of myth then, according to Ogden, is that which violates this principle, i.e., that God is wholly other.¹³⁷ Ogden notes that Bultmann substitutes speaking mythologically about God with ". . . analogical ways of speaking about God."¹³⁸ Bultmann questions whether it makes theological sense to speak mythologically and says that such language is inappropriate as the language of faith.¹³⁹ Ogden also notes that, for Bultmann, myth's incompatibility with scientific thinking provides the occasion for focusing on the true meaning of theological statements.¹⁴⁰ The true meaning of such statements:

¹³⁴Karl Barth, "Rudolf Bultmann--An Attempt to Understand Him," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, London, 1962, II, 118.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 123.

¹³⁶Schubert M. Ogden, ed., Existence and Faith, London, 1960, p. 20.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Schubert M. Ogden, The Reality of God, London, 1967, p. 167. This will be discussed more in the following section.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 168. ¹⁴⁰Ibid.

. . . is not scientific but "existential" and that the existentialist analysis of the early Martin Heidegger provides an alternative conceptuality in which this meaning can be given non-mythological expression.¹⁴¹

Alasdair MacIntyre is critical of Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of the myth in the New Testament and believes that Bultmann is too dependent on Martin Heidegger. "It is difficult to resist that for Bultmann Jesus is an early and imperfect anticipator of Heidegger."¹⁴² He admits that Bultmann would deny this accusation, but says Bultmann and Heidegger are really alike because what Heidegger asserts about existence Bultmann says is attained by decision. "Therefore, it is difficult to see what it is that Heidegger asserts we can do which Bultmann denies."¹⁴³

At any rate, it is important to say here in summary that the above demythologizing procedure is what Bultmann believes should be the task of every New Testament scholar today. For him, the message of Jesus and the early Christian Church can be conveyed only in terms that are relevant and meaningful to modern man whose world view is no longer continuous with that of the New Testament, but one which has been developed by modern science. By demythologizing, he does not intend to reject Scripture or the Christian message as a whole, but only the world view of Scripture through which it is conveyed. "To de-mythologize," Bultmann claims, "is to deny that the message of Scripture and of the Church is bound to an ancient world-view which is obsolete."¹⁴⁴ Although Bultmann doubts whether the modern scien-

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Alasdair MacIntyre, "Existentialism," A Critical History of Western Philosophy, ed. by D. J. O'Connor, London, 1964, p. 522.

¹⁴³Ibid. ¹⁴⁴Bultmann, op. cit., p. 36.

tific world view can perceive the whole of reality,¹⁴⁵ he continues to argue that this world view is that which shapes the thinking of modern men today and that ". . . modern men need it for their daily lives."¹⁴⁶

VIII. THE REAL "STUMBLING BLOCK" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

By the use of demythologizing, Bultmann is not trying to make the Gospel of the New Testament acceptable to modern man, but only understandable. He does not want to remove the skandalon of the Christian kerygma, but only to show what it really is. The mythical world view of the New Testament should not be equated with the "stumbling-block" of the Gospel, but it should be removed so that the real stumbling-block may become apparent. Some things which are not a part of the Christian proclamation, i.e., heaven, hell, demons, angels, etc., were acceptable to man of another epoch and therefore did not cause a hindrance to the Gospel because they were accepted as a part of the world view of that particular time. Demythologizing separates that world view from the Christian message and properly identifies the real "stumbling-block" as one's complete abandonment of all worldly security or man-made security and the complete openness to the call of God. The Word of God which comes to man through preaching not only calls him to God, who is beyond this world and scientific thinking, but also calls him to his true self. Real security is found only in God; and thus, for Bultmann, the real

¹⁴⁵Bultmann believes that historical science has prescribed limitations in that it can only investigate the reality of the visible, but God is invisible to such investigation. Cf. Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing," op. cit., p. 40; Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., pp. 83-ff.

¹⁴⁶Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 38.

"stumbling-block" is that the Gospel calls man to an abandonment of his own security and to ". . . a readiness to find security only in the unseen beyond, in God."¹⁴⁷ For Bultmann, the Word of God alone calls men into genuine freedom, and it is the task of demythologizing to make clear what the call and demands of the Word of God are.¹⁴⁸ Myth's real intention is to speak of a reality of existence which lies beyond what can be objectified but which is very much a part of man's authentic reality. It is the task of demythologizing through philosophical and theological reflection to make this reality clear.¹⁴⁹ What is the New Testament understanding of human existence which is of importance to modern man? It is that understanding which the theologian ought to be concerned with, and it is his task to make sure that the mythology of a past epoch does not obscure the real demands of the Word of God for man today.

In the preceding discussion, the writer has shown that Bultmann's understanding of myth is a direct result of his understanding of history. His understanding of the modern world view determines what he calls the mythological one presented in the New Testament. It has also been shown that he does not intend to eliminate the myth of the New Testament, but to interpret it; and, because myth deals with an understanding of human existence, then it is appropriate for Bultmann to interpret that myth anthropologically or existentially.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 44. Cf. also, pp. 36-43. It is this absolute-ness of the Christian claim which Karl Jaspers believes is the real stumbling-block of Christianity, but Bultmann is quick to correct this misunderstanding. Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologizing," op. cit., p. 193.

¹⁴⁸Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., pp. 40-1.

¹⁴⁹Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing," op. cit., pp. 40-1

In his interpretation of the myth in the New Testament, Bultmann asks the question: What understanding of human existence does this myth convey? Many questions, however, have not been answered, e.g., whether Bultmann is consistent in his understanding of myth and in his demythologizing, whether all New Testament myths can be interpreted existentially, and whether any speaking of God or His activity are not likewise mythological?

In closing, if Bultmann's understanding of myth and his need for demythologizing is tied to his understanding of history, his interpretation or demythologizing procedure¹⁵⁰ is no less based on his understanding of existential philosophy. The combination of both give him two reasons for rejecting the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event. The point here is that the resurrection of Jesus from the grave violates the "hiddenness" of God's actions by trying to objectify that activity in history, i.e., making the invisible visible. For Bultmann the act of God takes place in one's personal existence and not in visible events of the past.

¹⁵⁰Which he calls "hermeneutics." Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., pp. 45-6.

There are few points at which Bultmann has been more criticized and more misunderstood than in his well-known pronouncement, "The saving efficacy of the cross is not derived from the fact that it is the cross of Christ; it is the cross of Christ because it has this saving efficacy." Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythol-

BULTMANN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE RESURRECTION

Up to this point in the discussion, the writer has attempted to set forth the basis for understanding not only Bultmann's rejection of the resurrection of Jesus as an event of history, but also for his existential interpretation of Easter faith and his negative criticisms of the Resurrection narratives. One of the primary reasons for his rejection of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as an event of history, as has been shown, is his historical presuppositions which have also strongly influenced his understanding of God's activity in history. For Bultmann, history is closed to all supernatural or miraculous events, and God's activity is not open to historical inquiry. He holds that God's activity is hidden within history and not disclosed to neutral historical examination. For him, the activity of God is always a present activity, i.e., in the presentness of preaching God confronts the man of faith with a new self-understanding. This activity, however, is paradoxically related to a past event of history (Historie) which can be affirmed by the historian, i.e., the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. However, through the presentness of preaching, the man of faith acknowledges that this historical event is the cross of Christ, and it has a direct bearing upon his existential self-understanding. The cross, therefore, has a "saving efficacy" (the capability of initiating a new self-understanding); and because of this it is the cross of Christ.¹ This

¹There are few points at which Bultmann has been more criticized and more misunderstood than in his well-known pronouncement, "The saving efficacy of the cross is not derived from the fact that it is the cross of Christ; it is the cross of Christ because it has this saving efficacy." Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythol-

faith in the saving efficacy of the cross is for Bultmann the same thing as faith in the Resurrection.² He believes that ". . . the faith of Easter is just this faith in the word of preaching."³ In this sense, Easter, though not an event of the past, can be looked upon as the interpretation of the cross. For Bultmann, Easter is not an event, but the "meaning" of the cross; hence this will be the focus of this chapter. It is only in the preaching where the hearer is brought to the decision of either faith or unbelief, and that alone ". . . can illumine our understanding of ourselves."⁴ The real Easter faith for Bultmann then ". . . is faith in the word of preaching which brings illumination."⁵

I. EASTER FAITH AND THE HISTORICAL QUESTION

For Bultmann, the Resurrection is not an event of past history except in the sense--and only here--that the historian can speak of the rise of faith in the risen Lord in the early disciples. Historical criticism can only demonstrate that ". . . the first disciples came to believe in the resurrection."⁶ As noted above, while trying to make the Resurrection something which happened to the disciples--as well as that which happens to all believers in all ages--Bultmann has rejected the belief that the Resurrection was first of all some-

ogy," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 41. This writer will not pretend to understand this statement either in whole or in part, but certainly it does help to focus on the weakness of Bultmann's understanding of the cross. For further comment on this issue, cf. Karl Barth, "Rudolf Bultmann--An Attempt to Understand Him," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, London, 1962, II, 100.

²Bultmann, loc. cit. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 42. ⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

thing which happened to Jesus. He believes that Easter is the rise of faith in the risen Lord,⁷ though what is meant by "risen Lord" is evidently not to be equated with Jesus of Nazareth. Bultmann is certain that Jesus of Nazareth did not rise from the grave, but was raised only in the kerygma.⁸

Bultmann has made the following conclusions about the resurrection of Jesus as an event of history. First of all, he says that Easter faith is not interested in the historical question and that the Easter faith of the first disciples is not a fact on which one can base his faith.⁹ Unambiguously he contends, "The resurrection itself is not an event of past history."¹⁰ When considered as a nature miracle, the resurrection of Jesus is a myth, incredible, and incomprehensible.¹¹

From a positive point of view, Bultmann believes that the resurrection of Jesus, even though it is not a miraculous or supernatural event of the past, has a historic significance which can affect the man of faith here and now.¹² By means of the preaching of the cross and resurrection of Christ, the authentic life of man becomes possible and he is enabled to surrender to God, to love, to faith, and thus to a "Christian understanding of being."¹³ This existentialist understanding of the Resurrection gives man the answer

⁷Ibid.

⁸Rudolf Bultmann, "Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus," Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Heidelberg, 1960, p. 27.

⁹Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 42.

¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹Ibid., pp. 8, 39, 41-2. ¹²Ibid., pp. 37-ff.

¹³Ibid., pp. 19, 33.

to the anthropological problem posed by existentialist philosophy.¹⁴

Bultmann argues that the crucifixion of Jesus posed a question and a call for decision to the disciples. He writes:

The decision which Jesus' disciples had once made to affirm and accept his sending by "following" him, had to be made anew and radically in consequence of his crucifixion. The cross, so to say, raised the question of decision once more.¹⁵

Regarding the origin of the Easter story itself, Bultmann says that the Church had to surmount the scandal or question which the cross posed, and it did so in the Easter faith.¹⁶ This Easter faith was their way of understanding the cross of Jesus.

Here it must be objected that Bultmann does not follow closely enough the report of the New Testament. It is true that the cross posed a question of decision to the disciples, but the New Testament makes it clear that they chose despair and defeat as a result of the only interpretation they could logically (and historically) make in such a circumstance.. It was only after "something" subsequent to the cross happened that the disciples decided on another course. Bultmann will not ask what that "something" was and says it is an historical question which is irrelevant. One is not to ask what happened that produced this radical changed from defeat to triumph in the disciples. He believes it would be wrong to raise the historical question of how the disciples' preaching arose. Doing this, he maintains, would ". . . tie our faith in the word of God to the results of historical research. The word of preaching confronts us as the

¹⁴See Walter Kunneth, The Theology of the Resurrection, London, 1965, pp. 43-4, for a list of major publications by Rudolf Bultmann and others on this issue.

¹⁵Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1970-1, I, 44.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 45.

word of God. It is not for us to question its credentials."¹⁷ Even so, Bultmann eliminates the possibility of finding an answer to this question in the proclamation stories of the New Testament. He says the manner in which the Easter faith arose in the disciples ". . . has been obscured in the tradition by legend and is not of basic importance."¹⁸

Bultmann emphasizes the discrepancies in the Easter traditions to demonstrate his point; however, this line of argument has gaping problems. It is true that in the matter of details the Resurrection narratives differ from each other at various points;¹⁹ however, all of the Easter traditions agree that the source of the disciples' joy and the reason for their preaching was the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead. The one whose tragic end was the cause of the disciples' despair was later the source of their joy because he was raised from the dead. It is therefore a puzzle when Bultmann claims that the basic historical question--"the manner in which the Easter faith arose"--has been ". . . obscured in the traditions by legend." There is obscurity on matters of detail, but not on the historical question of what gave rise to the disciples' renewed and greatly expanded faith. Without exception, all of the Easter testi-

¹⁷Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁸Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, *loc. cit.* Italics mine.

¹⁹E.g., the location of the Resurrection appearances, the number of women at the tomb, to whom Jesus first appeared, the lack of mention of an ascension by three of the four Gospel writers and Paul, etc. Most of these difficulties are enumerated quite clearly in Hugh Anderson's brief but detailed essay, "The Easter Witness of the Evangelists," The New Testament in Historical and Contemporary Perspective, ed. by Hugh Anderson and William Barclay, Oxford, 1965, pp. 35-55. See also Chapters VI and VII of this thesis.

monies claim that Jesus was raised from the dead. As will be shown, there is a great deal of disagreement among scholars on the nature of or manner of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (e.g., a bodily resurrection, visionary appearance, etc.); but in the New Testament there is no question about the fact of this event. Easter was not something which happened primarily to the disciples, but to Jesus of Nazareth.

As has already been noted, Bultmann removes the Resurrection from that which happened to Jesus of Nazareth and has made it an experience which occurred in the lives of the first disciples and of all succeeding followers of Christ. This is certainly an incorrect understanding of the New Testament message. J. A. T. Robinson's evaluation of the New Testament traditions is much clearer and expresses their combined witness. He clearly recognizes that:

. . . the Resurrection remains for the New Testament, not primarily an experience, but an event. It uses the phrase "witnesses of the Resurrection," not of all who can testify to its power, but only of those who were eyewitnesses of the event--or rather of the identity between the risen Christ whom they had seen and the man with whom they had companied "during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us" (Acts 1:21-2; cf. 10:41; 13:31).²⁰

Bultmann will not allow for the possibility that the appearances of the risen Christ produced the faith and experiences of joy in the apostles, only that those experiences produced the appearances. He suggests that the so-called appearances of Christ to the disciples were probably self-induced psychological experiences (i.e., subjective visions) and believes that the historian can to some extent account for the first disciples' faith:

²⁰J. A. T. Robinson, "Resurrection in the New Testament," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, New York, 1962, IV, 49.

... from the personal intimacy which the disciples had enjoyed with Jesus during his earthly life, and so reduce the resurrection appearances to a series of subjective visions."²¹

Bultmann is quite willing to live with this conclusion since he clearly believes that the results of historical inquiry are the same for the Christian as they are for the non-Christian.²² He defends his view that Easter faith is uninterested in the historical question, however, by claiming that, "Historical research concerning the events after the death of Jesus can fundamentally have its eye on Jesus only as a historical and not as an eschatological phenomenon."²³

For Bultmann, "Real Easter Faith" is not faith in any event which has taken place in time and space history, but ". . . is faith in the work of preaching which brings illumination."²⁴ This kind of a statement, however, unleashes a flood of questions, e.g., what does the kerygma say, and what relation does this "illumination" have to historical fact? Especially significant is the question regarding the identity of the Christ who is alive in this preaching. Can there be an "illumination" which has no content? Who is the Christ of the kerygma, and what relation did he have to the crucified Jesus? If this "illumination" has a disregard for history, can that which produced it be called anything more than a cipher or even a myth?

In his response to his former student's criticisms, Bultmann writes, "To believe in the Christ who is present in the kerygma is the meaning of Easter faith."²⁵ That there is an element of truth

²¹Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 42.

²²Rudolf Bultmann and Werner Harenberg, "Is Jesus Risen as Goethe?" "Der Spiegel" on the New Testament, ed. by Werner Harenberg, trans. by James H. Burtness, London, 1970, p. 236.

²³Ibid. ²⁴Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," loc. cit.

²⁵Bultmann, "Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christus-

here cannot be denied, but does it go far enough? How did this Christ get into the kerygma in the first place? And who is this Christ? In the early Christian speech in Acts 2, reported to be that of Peter,²⁶ there is no ambiguity on these questions:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know . . . (vs. 23). This Jesus, . . . you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (vs. 24). But God raised him up . . . (vs. 32). This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses (vs. 36). Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (RSV Trans.)

There is no hedging about in this speech. Jesus of Nazareth was the one who was crucified and raised from the dead; and this same Jesus is both Lord and Christ. For the writer of Acts (and for his source/s) the Christ who is alive and comes to man in the kerygma is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. In this kerygma Easter is centered around an event which happened primarily to Jesus even though this message has important results for those who will receive it and

botschaft zum historischen Jesus," loc. cit.; underscoring mine.

²⁶Although one cannot argue conclusively that this speech came necessarily from Peter, the author of Luke-Acts has evidently used a primitive Christian source. This can be seen by its primitive Christology, i.e., the Resurrection here refers primarily to Jesus with the results of it being chiefly for him. This is quite different from the more developed theology of the Resurrection found in I Cor. 15 for instance where the focus is on Christian benefits. Cf. F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, Grand Rapids, 1968, pp. 18-21, who is quite persuasive on this issue. (Also cf. Johannes Munck, The Acts of the Apostles, Garden City, 1967.) Ernst Haenchen also admits that the book of Acts can be taken as source material for early primitive Christianity, though he qualifies his statement by saying that one must be careful to identify the "Lukan fabric" contained within it. (Cf. Ernst Haenchen, "The Book of Acts as Source Material for the History of Early Christianity," Studies in Luke-Acts, ed. by Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn, New York, 1966, pp. 248-78.) Without going into the question further, this writer believes that the speeches in Acts point to an earlier Christology prevalent in the Palestinian Church which was only later developed, say, by the time of Paul.

submit themselves to it (vv. 38-47).

Is there another New Testament source which would dispute the claim made of Jesus in Acts 2? Clearly this fact is brought out in all the Gospels (else why a life and death of Jesus and a resurrection of a hitherto unknown Christ?) and is no less clear in Paul. According to the New Testament, and Bultmann would surely agree, there would have been no kerygma without a belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The kerygma historically was proclaimed by a group of followers of Jesus, the occasion of which was their belief that he had been raised from the dead. Which came first: the faith of the disciples or the kerygma which they preached? The New Testament says that these events occurred (Jesus died, was raised and appeared), some disciples believed, and after this they began to preach. Only in this order would there be anything to preach! Bultmann, on the other hand, argues:

Christian faith did not exist until there was a Christian kerygma; i.e., a kerygma proclaiming Jesus Christ--specifically Jesus Christ the Crucified and Risen One--to be God's eschatological act of salvation This thinking--the theology of the New Testament--begins with the kerygma of the earliest church and not before.²⁷

One cannot help but reject completely this line of argument because there is no basis for the formulation of a kerygma apart from Christian faith, and there is no basis for Christian faith apart from something which could produce it in the lives of the disciples. How did the proclamation come to the first disciples? What gave rise to their belief that the cross was not in fact the end of Jesus?²⁸ That

²⁷Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁸Bultmann has consistently contended that the work of Jesus was finished on the cross (his interpretation of "it is finished") and required no completion through a bodily resurrection (Rudolf Bultmann, Glauben und Verstehen, Tübingen, 1965, Band III, 205). He

is a historical question which Bultmann will not allow to be asked and which he says is irrelevant; but without the raising of this question--however it is answered, one can neither present a meaningful message to modern man nor build a coherent New Testament theology. Even the nineteenth-century Leben-Jesu-Forschung scholars saw the value of this kind of questioning and based the rise of the proclamation in the overwhelming influence of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. For them, the proclamation did not have its origins in a historical vacuum, but in a historical person. Even though the "old questers" after the historical Jesus did not find much comfort in asserting the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (or any miraculous events), they at least tried to frame the foundation of their theology in a historical person whose history is not negligible. To this end, they were consistent with their historical assumptions and did have some explanation for the rise of Christian faith, even though it was a "natural" explanation.

Although it may be argued that Bultmann grounds Christian faith in the historical event of the cross, upon closer scrutiny, Bultmann is only concerned with the "thatness" of the cross and not any historical information about it. For Bultmann, the historical rootage of the activity of God in the cross is almost negligible. His theology is not directly related to God's activity in the cross of Christ, but only paradoxically so. The only historical rootage for Bultmann is his confidence in knowing that God did "something" at the cross which has existential significance today, though what it was that God did is both unknowable and unimportant for Christian

says that the exaltation of the historical Jesus took place on the cross, not afterwards.

faith. Bultmann's primary focus is clearly not upon an event of the past but upon a present activity of God which is only paradoxically related to the past.

One must therefore insist upon the New Testament sequence in this matter: the resurrection event--whatever was involved, Christian faith, and proclamation. Bultmann reiterates that the Resurrection event is the preaching encountering the obedient man of faith which leads to authentic existence, and that the historical question of what happened to initiate the preaching is unimportant. His consistent lack of interest in the historical question concerning the origins of Christianity leaves the whole of the kerygma open to the suspicion of myth. If Christian faith, as Bultmann contends, is rooted in the historical (historisch) thatness of Jesus, can he consistently neglect the significance of what can be said historically about him, however minute? Clearly few theologians would want to hinge Christian faith upon the changing results of historical research, but is the only alternative to this the declaration that such historical information is unimportant for Christian faith?²⁹

Objecting to Bultmann's view on the unimportance of factual information concerning the historical Jesus, James M. Robinson rightly asks:

. . . how can the indispensable historicity of Jesus be affirmed, while at the same time maintaining the irrelevance of

²⁹This is not to argue that the historian can describe the wonder of the resurrection of Christ, but that the historical questions and answers--where they can be known--are not unimportant for Christian faith. A critical look at the New Testament and the proclamation therein will not allow that Christianity began with the proclamation. Historically that does not make sense. Something must have occasioned the formation of the kerygma. Surely no historian would deny the validity of the important question of what it was and, moreover, the New Testament does not allow the question to go unanswered.

what a historical encounter with him would mean, once this has become a real possibility due to the rise of modern historiography?³⁰

Robinson adds to this that such an attitude could only lead to the conclusion ". . . that the Jesus of the kerygma could equally well be only a myth, for one has in fact declared the meaning of his historical person irrelevant."³¹ Ernst Käsemann, one of Bultmann's most prestigious students, has also echoed this concern when he argued that since something could be known of the historical Jesus, we must concern ourselves with it lest we find ourselves ultimately committed to a mythological Lord.³²

Bultmann counters these objections, however, by contending that Christian faith can never defend itself against the charges of mysticism, subjectivity, etc. and that there is always a risk in Christian faith. He writes:

. . . it is clear, on the one hand, that faith, speaking of God as acting, cannot defend itself against the charge of being an illusion, and, on the other hand, that faith does not mean a psychologically subjective event.³³

One could certainly respond to Bultmann here by arguing that if the act of God were involved in a genuine historical person--Jesus of Nazareth--then the subjectivity would be reduced considerably.³⁴ The

³⁰James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, London, 1970, p. 88.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ernst Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes, London, 1968, p. 46.

³³Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, London, 1966, p. 71.

³⁴Again, this is not to say that history could prove the activity of God, nor is it to deny the element of risk in faith, but only that admitting to the location of God's activity in history--which involves the unique--reduces significantly the element of subjectiv-

kerygma must not be dissolved of its content nor robbed of its historical setting. Indeed, an empty kerygma riding on an existential timeless plateau is a benefit to no one and certainly resembles nothing in the New Testament.³⁵ C. F. D. Moule is right when he says that a "bare kerygma," i.e., one lacking the historical information about Jesus contained in the New Testament, "is not basis enough for a Christian decision, if that kerygma includes no more history than the death of Jesus of Nazareth."³⁶ The decision not to examine or take seriously Jesus' place in history is not a Christian decision at all, according to Moule, ". . . even if it may be a moral or a religious decision."³⁷

Before closing this debate, Bultmann must be given his opportunity of appealing to Paul for support of his lack of interest in the historical Jesus. He states rather emphatically, "Now it is uncontestable that in Paul and in the rest of the New Testament, except in the Synoptic Gospels only the that and not the what /of

ity even though the Christian still walks by faith, and it is faith's response to the call of God in Christ which saves, not historical proofs.

³⁵Bultmann objects to the use of the word "timeless" here, especially since he argued so strongly against a theology based on timeless truths; cf. his essay, "General Truths and Christian Proclamation," History and Hermeneutic, ed. by Robert W. Funk, New York, 1967, pp. 153-62; also, Faith and Understanding, ed. by Robert W. Funk, trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith, London, 1966, p. 148; but what else can one say when Bultmann has made all inquiries into the historical core of the Christian faith irrelevant? This must be said in spite of the fact that Bultmann would come back by claiming that the "thatness" of Jesus secures the kerygma in history and prevents the message from becoming a timeless truth, "Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus," op. cit., p. 3.

³⁶C. F. D. Moule, The Phenomenon of the New Testament, Naperville, 1967, p. 79.

³⁷Ibid.

Jesus³⁸, plays a role." Bultmann frequently tries to justify his lack of interest in the historical Jesus by appealing to Paul's assertion, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer."³⁹ Note for example Bultmann's well-known pronouncement against the attempt to rescue the tradition of the historical Jesus from the flames of the critical "radicalisms" of his research. He writes:

I let it burn peacefully, for I see that that which burns is all fantasy-pictures of the life-of-Jesus theology, that is, the Christ according to the flesh. But the Christ according to the flesh is irrelevant for us; I do not know and do not care to know the inner secrets of the heart of Jesus.⁴⁰

In his very important essay, "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul,"⁴¹ Bultmann has defined the "Christ according to the flesh" as the "historical Jesus." He argues that since faith is called into existence after and on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ, and not before, Paul is indicating his lack of interest in the historical Jesus before the cross.⁴²

J. Louis Martyn has taken exception to Bultmann's lack of interest in the historical Jesus and argues that Paul is not contrasting knowledge of *χριστὸς κατὰ σάρκα* with *χριστὸς κατὰ πνεῦμα* as Bultmann is suggesting, but with *χριστὸς κατὰ σταυρόν* as is seen in

³⁸Bultmann, "Is Jesus Risen as Goethe?" *op. cit.*, p. 231.

³⁹II Cor. 5:16, RSV.

⁴⁰Rudolf Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, trans. by James C. G. Greig, London, 1966, p. 101.

⁴¹Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-46.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 277-ff.

the context of the passage.⁴³ He says this indicates that some who have known Jesus before the cross could with pride proclaim this, but since his death there has come a new way of knowing him, i.e., according to the cross.⁴⁴ Since the death of Jesus all things have to be seen in a different light. This does not do away with the Jesus before the cross, but indicates that that picture of Jesus is inadequate, especially in light of the cross. This does not mean that the former knowledge is irrelevant, only that it is incomplete until it is knowledge understood κατὰ σταυρόν.

Martyn writes:

The essential failure of the Corinthians consists in their inflexible determination to live either before the cross (the super-apostles of II Corinthians) or after the cross (the Gnostics of I Corinthians) rather than in the cross.⁴⁵

He goes further and says that the new way of knowing is not in some "ethereal sense a spiritual way of knowing," but rather it is a way of knowing in the midst of everyday life (which he calls the "junction of the Ages") wherein by the cross the ". . . veil is taken away, the creation is new, the old has passed away, look!, the new has come."⁴⁶

Hugh Anderson also counters Bultmann's interpretation of II Corinthians 5:16 and contends that Paul is not here denying the historicity of the life of Jesus:

. . . but is refusing to seek the security of a historically accessible and verifiable Lord, and is expressing his openness to the encounter with His Person or Selfhood in the Christ of

⁴³J. Louis Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5:16," Christian History and Interpretation, ed. by W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 284-5.

⁴⁴Ibid. ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 285.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 286.

faith.⁴⁷

Xavier Léon-Dufour agrees with Anderson that Paul is not denying the historicity of Jesus and adds that since those in Corinth were maintaining "outdated forms" of knowledge of Jesus--thereby restricting their knowledge of him, Paul insists that they should open themselves to "new forms of knowledge" belonging to the new order of creation (II Cor. 5:17).⁴⁸ Paul, he adds, does not here reject knowledge of the "historical" Jesus, only that their knowledge of him should not be restricted to that alone. Such knowledge should ". . . open the path to that full knowledge of Christ as Lord which is given by the Holy Spirit."⁴⁹ He concludes:

Paul did not set aside the historical Jesus in favour of a spiritual or mystical Christ; he knew only one Jesus, who was crucified, rose again and now lives for ever.⁵⁰

A summary of the above discussion is perhaps now in order. Bultmann has rejected the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the grave and calls the notion incredible and absurd.⁵¹ However, he has maintained the importance of the resurrection for Christian faith. To the question, in what sense is belief in the resurrection of Jesus a basic ingredient of the Christian faith and indeed a distinguishing mark for the Christian, Bultmann replies thusly:

Christian faith in the resurrection believes that death is not swallowed up into the Nothing, but that the same God, who is always coming to us, also comes to us in our death. In this sense, faith in the resurrection is the criterion for whether

⁴⁷Hugh Anderson, "The Historical Jesus and the Origins of Christianity," Scottish Journal of Theology, 13:131, 1960.

⁴⁸Xavier Léon-Dufour, The Gospels and the Jesus of History, ed. and trans. by John McHugh, London, 1968, p. 59.

⁴⁹Ibid. ⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Bultmann, "Is Jesus Risen as Goethe?" op. cit., pp. 235-7.

someone is a Christian or a non-Christian.⁵²

This response of Bultmann is again unsatisfactory since it does not answer the question of the origin of belief in the resurrection of Jesus. When asked what it means to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, Bultmann's response is equally evasive. It means ". . . to allow oneself to be encountered by the proclamation and to respond to it by faith."⁵³ It is clear from this and the above discussion that the resurrection, for Bultmann, has little to do with the resurrection of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. The validity of this statement can only be gathered from an examination of his many statements on the matter, e.g., he writes that the Resurrection stories of the New Testament are ". . . the legendary concretization of the faith of the first Christian community in the risen Lord, the faith that God has exalted the crucified one as Lord."⁵⁴

Enough has been shown to indicate the extent to which Bultmann's historical presuppositions have consistently held sway in his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus. The way Bultmann has described the Resurrection narratives brings to mind here a very

⁵²Ibid., p. 235.

⁵³Ibid. Can these statements be squared with his remark on a similar issue in his essay on πιστεύω? Compare the above questions and Bultmann's responses with the following: "It is apparent that acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord is intrinsic to Christian faith along with acknowledgement of the miracle of His resurrection, i.e., acceptance of this miracle as true The resurrection is not just a remarkable event. It is a soteriological fact in virtue of which Jesus became the κύριος. This is self-evident, and other statements confirm it." Rudolf Bultmann, "πιστεύω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, 1968, VI, 209. There are times when Barth's well-known pun aimed at Bultmann seems appropriate: "I must confess I know of no contemporary theologian who has so much to say about understanding, or one which has so much cause to complain of being misunderstood." Barth, op. cit., pp. 83-4.

⁵⁴Bultmann, "Is Jesus Risen as Goethe?" op. cit., p. 237.

discerning remark made by Xavier Léon-Dufour:

The problem facing the historian is here at its most acute, since it is impossible for him to assess any evidence for the Resurrection without first making a personal option about the possibility of a man's rising to life from the grave.⁵⁵

Bultmann has rejected the historical Jesus as an object of faith; and, on the other hand, he has dismissed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as a fact of history. The first he dismissed as irrelevant for faith--except that Jesus lived and died, i.e., his "thatness"--and the latter because it is mythological. For Bultmann the basis for Christian faith is not a past event of history, but the present activity of God which comes during the preaching of the Word. His desire to maintain the paradoxical relation of Christian faith to a past event shows his awareness of the danger of Christian faith not being rooted in history, but even here he refuses to allow any questions about how the act of God took place in Christ or what it was that happened on the cross.

When Bultmann refuses to inquire into the relation of the historical Jesus to the Christ of the kerygma and when he admits that the Christ of faith in the earliest Christian preaching is a mythological figure, one cannot help but ask who Bultmann's Christ is and what relation he has to the activity of God on the cross. Bultmann's Christ is in great danger of dissolving into a symbol or a cipher useful for Christian preaching, but not indispensable.

Bultmann contends that he has not rejected the Christ event on the cross, but he is convinced that faith does not need to know what that event consists of or what it may have involved. Christian faith neither needs such information nor a resurrection from the dead as a

⁵⁵Léon-Dufour, op. cit., p. 254.

basis for faith. He is interested more in the results of Easter faith and will only allow that those results in the life of the believer have paradoxically some historical rootage, though what that historical element is is not of primary concern. One is free to speculate with the historian on the origins of Easter faith, but the matter is of little importance.

Again it may be said that Bultmann has rejected the resurrection of Jesus in its traditional sense first of all because historically it is incredible and without parallel.⁵⁶ Secondly, he rejects the resurrection of Jesus because it involves a nature-miracle which would put faith on the level of "sight," and again he rejects it because he claims there are so many contradictions contained within the Resurrection narratives that what really happened has been obscured.⁵⁷ Above all, it is clear that Bultmann's historical presuppositions have led him to "demythologize" the resurrection of Jesus of all of its mythical elements--the concretizing of the "other-worldly" message of Easter into the "this-worldly" pictures; and his philosophical presuppositions have led him to re-interpret it in terms of an existential self-understanding to be found only in the Easter proclamation. John Macquarrie's analysis of Bultmann's procedure is correct when he concludes that the complete acceptance of the historical assumptions by the theologian inevitably leads to an existential interpretation of the Resurrection

⁵⁶John Macquarrie has rightly criticized Bultmann at this point for his rejection and the ruling out of the possibility of a resurrection in advance of his investigation. Cf. John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, London, 1955, p. 72.

⁵⁷It is difficult to see why he should add this point since he has eliminated the event already by his first two objections. Were there no problems of harmony, one cannot believe that Bultmann would accept the narratives as historical fact.

and the need to demythologize it.⁵⁸

II. THE HERE AND NOW CHARACTER OF THE RESURRECTION

Another point which has been variously debated is Bultmann's view that the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus focuses on the here and now. Ian Henderson rightly describes this aspect in Bultmann's interpretation of the Resurrection:

Resurrection [for Bultmann] is something here and now. It is entering into a new dimension of existence, a being set free from the past and from guilt and from care and being made open to one's fellow-men in love.⁵⁹

For confirmation of this presentness of the Resurrection, Bultmann appeals to Paul's controversial passage in Romans 6:1-11. He says that here Paul teaches that in the sacrament of baptism Christians participate in the death and resurrection of Christ.⁶⁰ The Resurrection, Bultmann says, is shown in its proper light in this passage.

It is not simply that we shall walk with him in newness of life and be united with him in his resurrection (Rom. 6:4, ff.); we are already doing so here and now. "Even so reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ" (Rom. 6:11).⁶¹

Bultmann's interpretation of Romans 6, though not without merit, is far from what Paul intended his hearers to understand. Paul never intended his hearers to believe that the Resurrection was a present reality in the sense that their ^{hope-for} future resurrection was already here. This is clear in the passage itself where

⁵⁸John Macquarrie, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought, London, 1971, pp. 362-4.

⁵⁹Ian Henderson, Rudolf Bultmann, London, 1968, p. 35.

⁶⁰Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 40.

⁶¹Ibid.

the future holds still more for the believer. The future has not been fully realized in the present.

For if we have been united in the likeness of (his) death, we shall also be (united in his) resurrection. /καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐσόμεθα./ We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, (and) we may no longer be servants of sin. For he who has died has been set free from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. /πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ./ (Rom. 6:5-8).

For Paul the future has not yet been fully realized, though without a doubt there are blessings of salvation which are present realities for the believer, e.g., the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer as in Romans 8:14-17. This work of God now in the life of the believer, however, does not do away with the hope of the resurrection which is yet future as is clear in Romans 8:18-25. Accordingly, if that hope is realized in the present, then it is no longer hope!

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with patience for it. (Rom. 8:22-25).

Although there are present benefits gleaned for the believer from the work of Christ, i.e., "the first fruits of the Spirit," this does not nullify the Christian's hope to be united also in Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Bultmann is right to express the very important results of the act of God in Christ, but it is not a careful reading of Paul which says that the full benefits of God's work in Christ have been realized in the present. The work of God in the life of the believer is a guarantee of things to come; it is not the complete fulfillment (II Cor. 5:5).

One of the biggest problems with Bultmann at this point is his desire to secure for the believer the results of the act of God in raising Christ from the dead apart from any act of God in raising him from the dead. In other words, he is interested only in the results of the event and not the event itself. Bultmann fails to accept that first of all the resurrection of Jesus was more than an experience of the disciples. Although he rightly sees that Easter has present benefits for the man of faith, he refuses to admit that the Resurrection was something which happened first of all to Jesus of Nazareth.

Bultmann's existentialist interpretation not only calls into question the actual fact of the Resurrection itself, but the existential implications of Easter are released from their roots in historical fact. Although he does not entirely dispense with the historical Jesus of Nazareth, so that more than an "event of consciousness" in man is involved,⁶² the most impressive aspect of the Resurrection for him is the present experience and not the event itself. Bultmann does not hold to the event of the Resurrection except for its existential results in succeeding generations of Christians.

Walter Kunneth believes that Bultmann's understanding of the resurrection of Jesus is in fact a philosophical reinterpretation of the Christian faith, ". . . a metamorphosis of the theological content of the resurrection reality."⁶³ Kunneth is correct in saying that Bultmann's kerygma is no longer identical with that of the evangelists and apostles.⁶⁴ Bultmann has for the most part released the Resurrection results in the life of the believer from their

⁶²Kunneth, op. cit., p. 45. ⁶³Ibid. ⁶⁴Ibid.

moorings in history, an act which has the effect of making the implications of Resurrection faith something of a "timeless truth," an interpretation which Bultmann has tried to avoid.⁶⁵ One wonders how the Christian may become contemporary with Christ in his death and resurrection if the risen Lord ". . . as the historically crucified Jesus of Nazareth has not appeared on the scene at all as a reality in the past upon which salvation is based?"⁶⁶ It is not at all clear in Bultmann's discussion of Romans 6 how the Christian can be risen with Christ if Christ is not risen at all.

III. THE "RISK" OF FAITH AND THE RESURRECTION

One of the values of Bultmann's understanding of the Resurrection is the point he makes about the risk of faith. He is right when he claims that Christian faith cannot buttress itself in the Resurrection by the faith of the first disciples and thereby eliminate the risk of faith which the Resurrection always involves.⁶⁷ In other words, there can be no way which makes faith a matter of sight.⁶⁸ This must be admitted by all,⁶⁹ but one wonders at the risk

⁶⁵Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, op. cit., p. 32.

⁶⁶Kunneth, op. cit., p. 46.

⁶⁷Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 42.

⁶⁸This is true for Christians today, even though it was not so for the first disciples. They could see the continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. Notice the dominant place of o_{is} in Acts 1:3. It is important for Christians today that the early Christians could testify to the reality of the Resurrection because they could see. Their "sight" is a part of the Christian proclamation which helps to guarantee to Christians in succeeding generations that faith is not based on the mere wishes of Jesus' faithful followers. The kerygma also includes the fact that Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death, but this will be discussed in more detail in the last chapter of this thesis.

⁶⁹Wolfgang Pannenberg has made a significant attempt to do

of faith for Bultmann since he has eliminated the Resurrection as an event which happened to Jesus. This event of Jesus, however, was a major part of the faith of the early Christian community. The element of risk in faith has to do precisely with the fact that the proclamation is based upon God's unique activity in history in the person of Jesus. Bultmann's desire to maintain the element of risk for faith, however, is commendable.

IV. THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Bultmann's denial of the Resurrection has been centered upon his rejection of the notion of the resuscitation of a dead body. Referring to Karl Jaspers, Bultmann states quite clearly, "He is as convinced as I am that a corpse cannot come back to life or rise from the grave"70 This is but one place where Bultmann seems to say that the New Testament teaching of the resurrection of Jesus is merely a resuscitation of a corpse. However, is this what the New Testament teaches? George Ladd disagrees with Bultmann and argues that even if the objection of Bultmann were valid--i.e., that a resuscitation of a corpse is incredible, ". . . it carries no weight, for the New Testament nowhere pictures Jesus' resurrection as the resuscitation of a corpse but as the emergence within time and space

this very thing by arguing historically for the resurrection of Jesus. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, trans. by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, London, 1970; but as will be shown subsequently in Chapter VII, this attempt cannot be justified. If Christians could prove the Resurrection apart from faith, then it would no longer be an article of faith. Note, for example, John 20:29.

⁷⁰Rudolf Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologizing," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, London, 1962, II, 184; cf. also Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 8.

of a new order of life."⁷¹ The resurrection of Jesus was significantly more than a simple return to life from the grave as is clear in all of the Easter traditions. This subject will be discussed in more detail in Chapter VII, but it must be noted here that even if Ladd were able to prove his point about the nature of the resurrection of Christ, surely Bultmann would reject it since Ladd's view still involves a nature miracle.

V. THE EXALTATION OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

Bultmann claims that Jesus was "exalted" on the cross and not in a resurrection from the dead. In his dialogue with Der Spiegel, he denies that this view is inconsistent with the New Testament teaching on the subject. He explained:

Perhaps it would be useful to point out here that the Gospel of John uses the word "exaltation" in a double sense: the exaltation of Jesus on the cross is at the same time his exaltation into heavenly glory, the realization of Easter faith.⁷²

Whatever else Bultmann meant here is not expanded upon, but here it is clear that he makes Jesus of Nazareth the exalted Lord by means of the cross,⁷³ rather than by the resurrection from the dead. Does this shed some light on the place of Jesus in Bultmann's theology? He does speak of the exaltation of Jesus by his death on the cross

⁷¹George Eldon Ladd, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Christian Faith and Modern Theology, ed. by Carl F. H. Henry, New York, 1964, p. 272.

⁷²Bultmann, "Is Jesus Risen as Goethe?" op. cit., p. 237.

⁷³Bultmann, when explaining the need for the thatness of Jesus, says there must be maintained in this assertion the paradox "... that a historical figure, the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is at the same time the eschatological figure, the Lord Jesus Christ." Ibid., p. 231.

elsewhere,⁷⁴ but he is certainly not clear in what he means. Whatever Bultmann's comments on the exaltation of Jesus on the cross may mean, it seems clear that they do not mean that Jesus of Nazareth is the exalted Lord who meets us in the kerygma. If this is an inaccurate statement, then Bultmann is surely to blame since he makes such broad sweeping pronouncements against any interest in Jesus of Nazareth as having significance for faith. He also makes a number of obscure statements about Jesus' relation to the Christ of faith. He does, however, plead his case for the connection of faith to the cross of the historical Jesus in his response to Julius Schniewind:

To ignore the connection between faith on the one hand and the cross of Christ⁷⁵ as a past event on the other would certainly mean surrendering the confession and the kerygma. But that was not at all my meaning /intention/. What I am concerned with is the "historic" significance of the unique /einmaligkeit = once-for-allness/ event of past history, in virtue of which it possesses eschatological significance although it is a unique event of past history.⁷⁶

In another place, it again appears as though Bultmann believes that Jesus of Nazareth was exalted on the cross and is the Christ of the kerygma. He writes:

The cross is not an isolated event, as though it were the end of Jesus, which needed the resurrection subsequently to preserve it. When he suffered death, Jesus was already the Son of God,

⁷⁴Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., pp. 45, 82-3. II/3

⁷⁵Jesus of Nazareth is to be understood here since this would not be an adequate response to Schniewind's criticism otherwise. Cf. Burton H. Throckmorton, The New Testament and Mythology, London, 1960, p. 50.

⁷⁶Rudolf Bultmann, "Reply to Thesis of J. Schniewind," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 110. But what does Bultmann mean by a "unique" event of past history? Does not history confirm that other crucifixions took place? What makes this one unique as an event of the past? Why did God choose to act in this event? It seems that Bultmann is inconsistent at this point in his attempt to relate the historical Jesus to the kerygma.

and his death by itself was the victory over the power of death.⁷⁷

However, how can this be harmonized with his famous/infamous statement in the same essay where he states:

If the Christ who died such a death /on the cross/ was the pre-existent Son of God, what could death mean for him? Obviously very little if he knew he would rise again in three days!⁷⁸

Here it seems as though Bultmann says one thing in one place and something else in another. Did Jesus of Nazareth die as the Son of God? Was he exalted on the cross? What was the actual fate of Jesus after death? What does Bultmann mean by exaltation? He is not at all clear at this point.

VI. THE UNITY OF THE CROSS AND THE RESURRECTION

Bultmann is correct in recognizing the cross and the resurrection of Jesus as a unity in the New Testament, i.e., that they are inseparable one from the other in the Christian proclamation (Rom. 4:25). Also, it is true as he indicates that the Resurrection is--in part at least--a way of pointing to the significance of the cross for faith as the event of salvation.⁷⁹ This should not be considered any concession, since the Resurrection is closely tied to the death of Jesus in the early Christian proclamation (I Cor. 15:3-8; Rom.

⁷⁷Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., pp. 38-9.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 8.

⁷⁹This is not to deny, as Bultmann does, that the crucifixion and the Resurrection can have independent meanings. They do not constitute one event plus an interpretation as he says. The New Testament shows the emphasis of being crucified with Christ in his death in Romans 6 as being separate from the experience of new life which is seen in the Resurrection. Cf. also Throckmorton, op. cit., p. 203.

4:25).⁸⁰

Bultmann, however, carries his assertion beyond the truth that the cross and the resurrection are an inseparable unity⁸¹ and concludes that they form only one ". . . single indivisible cosmic event" ⁸² The Resurrection is not a subsequent event--say three days later--to the cross. "Indeed," writes Bultmann, "faith in the resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross, faith in the cross as the cross of Christ."⁸³ He insists the cross and Resurrection are always proclaimed together, and they should not and cannot be separated.

Bultmann believes that the first preachers of the Gospel had lived in personal intercourse with the historical Jesus, and because of this the cross was an experience of their lives. Because of this, he says that the cross ". . . presented them with a question and disclosed to them its meaning."⁸⁴ But what is meant by this? Bultmann answers by saying that the Resurrection is the interpretation (or meaning) of the cross which was disclosed to them while Jesus was on the cross. He holds that if the Resurrection were an event

⁸⁰Bultmann denies that I Corinthians 15:3-8 is kerygma in his "Reply to . . . Schniewind," op. cit., p. 112. Thus, accepting that what encounters the Christian in the kerygma is the Easter testimony of the disciples, Bultmann states emphatically, "But I cannot accept I Corinthians 15:3-8 as kerygma." However, in his essay on πίστις and πιστεύω he openly admits that this passage is kerygma! Explaining the content of faith, he uses this very passage. "In I C. 15:11 Paul says: οὕτως κηρύσσομεν καὶ οὕτως ἐπιστεύετε with reference to the εὐαγγέλιον (v. 1) which includes ἐν πρώτοις (v. 3) the fact that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that on the third day He was raised again, and that He bore witness to himself as the risen Lord." Cf. Bultmann, "πιστεύω," loc. cit. Bultmann even appears to accept the kerygmatic force of ὅτι as designating kerygma (cf. p. 210) which, of course, many scholars do. Cf. Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, New York, 1964, pp. 211-2.

⁸¹Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., p. 38.

⁸²Ibid., p. 39. ⁸³Ibid., p. 41. ⁸⁴Ibid., p. 38.

subsequent to the cross, then one would have to raise the historical question of how the Resurrection could vindicate the saving efficacy of the cross. He does not deny that the resurrection of Jesus was preached as such by the early Church (Acts 2), but claims that such a procedure would subject Christian faith to historical verification.⁸⁵ Bultmann calls the Resurrection itself an object of faith and asserts that one can neither prove the efficacy of one faith statement by another,⁸⁶ nor subject Christian faith to the changing whims of historical criticism. The Resurrection, then, according to Bultmann is not an historical event, but an article of faith in the saving efficacy of the cross.⁸⁷

He is indeed correct in maintaining that the Resurrection cannot be for us a "miraculous proof" of the saving efficacy of the cross even though it obviously was for the first disciples. However, for Bultmann, all events of history are subject to historical inquiry, and it would be unthinkable to submit Christian faith to the critical analysis of the historian. For him, the only event of history, as Schniewind clearly indicates, is the beginning of the disciples' faith in the Resurrection.⁸⁸

Again, Bultmann is right when he states that the historian can neither prove nor reconstruct the resurrection of Jesus Christ to any degree of certainty within his framework of cause and effect events. However, does it necessarily follow then that this event did not or could not occur? Is not Bultmann's confidence in the historical

⁸⁵For Bultmann all events of history are subject to confirmation by historical research.

⁸⁶Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 40, 42. ⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 41-2.

⁸⁸Schniewind, op. cit., p. 69.

method of inquiry, as Schniewind suggests, standing in the way and usurping the place of the primitive kerygma?⁸⁹

Along with the above question, how has the cross "disclosed its meaning" to the first disciples? All of the Easter testimonies point to something which lies beyond the cross which could not, by any stretch of the reports, be called a mere interpretation of the cross. Even John, whom Bultmann says places the exaltation of Jesus in the cross, has found it necessary in his gospel to give witness to an event which followed the death and burial of Jesus and which occurred on the "first day of the week" (Jn. 20:1). Why? If the meaning of Jesus' death was disclosed in the cross, why do all of the evangelists report otherwise? J. W. D. Smith is right when he says that the cross could hardly have disclosed its meaning to the disciples ". . . unless it had been followed by an objective experience which assured them of Jesus' victory over death."⁹⁰ The cross brought defeat and cowardice to the disciples, not victory and triumph. The meaning of the cross certainly was disclosed to them, but not in the cross; it was disclosed only in the resurrection of Jesus. As Throckmorton has correctly shown, Bultmann knows only of the dying of Christ and the response of the believers; but Paul speaks of two events, not one.⁹¹ The second of these events is the one which Paul believes disclosed the meaning of the former. Throckmorton rightly contends that if Christ were not raised from the dead, then the future becomes uncertain for the Christian who dies with Christ,

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 73.

⁹⁰J. W. D. Smith, "The Resurrection of Christ: Myth or History?" Expository Times, 72:373, Spring, 1961.

⁹¹Throckmorton, op. cit., p. 205.

and it is in fact only an illusion.⁹²

Although it is true that the cross and resurrection of Jesus are inseparable in the proclamation of the Gospel--neither event in itself is adequate for a correct understanding of Christian faith, historically they are two separate events. This view is found in all four Gospels, the early Acts speeches, and in Paul (I Cor. 15:3-5). It is correct to say that the cross is meaningless in itself and only forms a sad ending to a once brilliant career of a man from Nazareth, but the resurrection of Jesus gave a new understanding to the early Christians of the significance of the death of Jesus. In the earliest Christian community, the resurrection of Jesus, and not his death, was the primary focus of preaching (Acts 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.). As the Church's theology developed, the significance of the death of Christ became more and more recognized (I Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:10; II Cor. 5:14-15). It is true that the resurrection of Jesus interpreted the significance of his death to the early Christian community, but this does not thereby indicate that it is the same event or yet simply an understanding of the saving efficacy of the cross.

The death and resurrection of Jesus form a unity in the kerygma of the Church, but the Church has never considered them as one historical event. Together they form the basis for God's act in Christ in providing salvation; and in this sense, and only in this sense, can it be claimed that they together form one salvation event. Historically they are separated by a space of a few days.⁹³

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³The precise length of the "after three days" is not known. It is probable that the "third day" simply means within a short period of time.

VII. FURTHER COMMENT AND SUMMARY

In the beginning of this chapter, this writer set out to give an exposition of Bultmann's understanding of Easter showing how his well-known rejection of the resurrection of Jesus as an event of history is the logical outcome of his understanding of history and the activity of God which he describes in terms of existentialist philosophy. Although Bultmann's understanding of history is similar to that of the liberal scholars who preceded him,⁹⁴ Bultmann takes exception to them in part when he argues that man is an existential being who decides his future and whose existence is not determined by the laws of causal necessity.

Bultmann's concept of history has been shaped in part by an existentialist understanding of man. For him, man can live authentically, i.e., being freed from the past and open to decide for the future; or he can live inauthentically, i.e., his existence is determined by the course of events which come his way. The ability to live authentically, however, comes through freedom from one's past which is attained only by submission to the call of God which comes through the preaching of the cross of Christ.

The Gospel, for Bultmann, offers man an opportunity for a new understanding of himself which allows him to live authentically in freedom. However, the existential understanding in the Gospel is clothed with mythology, the trappings of an outdated world view in which the New Testament writers tried to conceptualize in a pre-rational period this existential self-understanding. It becomes the

⁹⁴Both hold to the closed causal nexus as well as the other assumptions of historiography developed by the nineteenth-century positivists.

task of the theologian therefore to extricate the New Testament proclamation from the myth which surrounds it. This is done by "demythologizing," or interpreting, the myth in existentialist categories.

It now becomes clear that Bultmann's understanding of history determines for him what is myth, and his existentialist understanding decides for him how that myth is to be interpreted. The difference here between Bultmann and the liberal theologians who preceded him is that even though both agree that the supernatural trappings of the New Testament are mythological, Bultmann has not dismissed the myth from the New Testament proclamation as his predecessors did; but instead he has interpreted it existentially.

The importance of all of this for understanding Bultmann's conception of Easter is clear. It is his understanding of history which has led him to conclude that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was not an event of history, but rather a mythological expression which interprets the significance of the cross of Christ. He has interpreted the Resurrection in existentialist categories stressing, however, the Easter faith of the disciples. He has focused upon the existential benefits of Easter for the disciples and contends that the new self-understanding which they received is available to modern man through the preaching of the early Church's kerygma. Bultmann has not, however, demythologized the resurrection of Jesus; he has dismissed it and in turn emphasized the Easter faith of the disciples and the existential benefits which their preaching has for modern man. Bultmann has failed to explain the existential benefits of Easter for Jesus. He does speak of the exaltation of Jesus on the cross, however; but what is meant by this is not at all clear. Easter faith is for Bultmann the true existential understanding of the cross, but he does not include the resurrection of Jesus.

Faith in the Resurrection ". . . is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross"95

Bultmann is convinced that Easter faith means the same for us as it did for the first disciples⁹⁶ although one cannot help but wonder how he can make this statement. He admits that Easter faith means ". . . the self-attestation of the risen Lord, the act of God in which the redemptive event of the cross is completed . . . ;"⁹⁷ but how can this be true if Jesus did not rise from the grave? For the early disciples the self-attestation of the risen Lord was through his resurrection from the dead (Acts 2), not a new understanding of the cross which was disclosed to the disciples in the cross itself.⁹⁸

Bultmann believes that the mention of the Resurrection in the New Testament is ". . . simply an attempt to convey the meaning of the cross."⁹⁹ The Resurrection stories are expressions of the new faith of the disciples which point to the meaning of the cross. It is the Easter faith of the disciples--which produced the Easter stories--which points to the significance of the cross of Christ.

Since ". . . the cross posed a question for the disciples and disclosed to them its meaning," it is clear that this "disclosure" is the basis of Easter faith and explains why Bultmann can say that the cross and resurrection of Christ form ". . . a single, indivisible cosmic event."¹⁰⁰ For these reasons one can only speak of the "meaning" of Easter for Bultmann, and it is this meaning which he believes opens up for men the possibility of authentic life.¹⁰¹

Again it must be objected that Bultmann has only interpreted history, according to Bultmann, but the only aspect of the history

⁹⁵Bultmann, op. cit., p. 41, italics his. ⁹⁶Ibid., p. 42.

⁹⁷Ibid. ⁹⁸Ibid., p. 38. ⁹⁹Ibid. ¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 39.

the cross of Christ and not the Resurrection. The New Testament is quite clear that the resurrection of Jesus was a separate event from the cross. This is seen in the early proclamation of the Church when it claims that Christ was raised "the third day" (I Cor. 15:4). It was the resurrection of Christ and not the cross which formed the basis of the earliest Christian preaching. In fact, the cross of Christ played a minimal role in the Church's proclamation at first, and the resurrection of Jesus received the primary attention (Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12, 33; Rom. 10:9, 10). Only later in the Church's developing theology was the death of Jesus reported to have had significance for Christian faith (Rom. 5:8, 9; II Cor. 5:15; I Tim. 2:5, 6; Gal. 3:13).

Bultmann is right to emphasize the existential benefits of Easter faith, but not to the exclusion of the Easter event. The resurrection of Jesus was never an interpretation of the meaning of the cross but an event through which the early Church believed that Jesus of Nazareth had been vindicated and exalted (Acts 2:32-36).

One may again turn to Bultmann's theological procedure and see another reason for his denial of the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. Since all historical events are of the same order within the causal nexus of the universe and are in principle capable of historical examination, he must therefore reject the resurrection of Jesus not only because this event violates the modern world view of the universe, but more especially it cannot be verified through that historical method. The kerygma of Christian faith has its roots in history, according to Bultmann, but the only aspect of the kerygma which can be verified historically is the cross.

Again, since God's activity is within history and does not disrupt its causal connections, it is easy for Bultmann to confess

the act of God in the cross of Christ since the cross is both meaningful as an event of history, i.e., it can be examined by the critical historian as an historisch event, and yet does not disclose God's hidden activity to neutral observation. Although the historisch connections of the cross are clear to the historian, its geschichtlich significance is not. The hidden activity of God is revealed only in the preaching of the cross.

If, on the other hand, the Resurrection were an event of history, the act of God would not be hidden to the neutral observer; and this would in turn destroy the concept of Christian faith, i.e., that the Christian could walk by sight and not by faith. Since for Bultmann all events of history are capable of historical verification, theoretically the historian would then be able to prove the act of God in history and reduce faith to sight. Such an act would allow the historian to substantiate the claims of Christ by showing that Christ had been raised from the dead. This procedure would compel the skeptic to believe in Christ and thereby destroy the possibility of decision.¹⁰² Theologically then, according to Bultmann, an event involving the resurrection of Jesus would also nullify Christian faith, the hiddenness of God's activity, and the possibility of decision.

Both historically and theologically, the resurrection of Jesus is for Bultmann untenable. He has therefore reduced the resurrection of Jesus to the existential implications of the cross of Christ. In this way, the hiddenness of God's activity is preserved because it allows an historisch event in which God is at work to remain ambig-

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 38-42.

uous to the neutral observer. Faith is preserved and the world view of modern man--which demands a closed causal nexus--is undisturbed. It is only by faith in the word of preaching that the cross is seen to have existential significance for man.

One of the major problems with Bultmann's whole procedure is that it does not explain historically how the cross became a symbol of victory for the early Church. It does not clarify how the cross disclosed its meaning to the disciples. Bultmann recognizes this problem, but he refuses to allow faith to ask the question.

It would be wrong at this point to raise again the problem of how this preaching /of the cross/ arose historically, as though that could vindicate its truth. That would be to tie our faith in the Word of God to the results of historical research.¹⁰³

Bultmann acknowledges that the New Testament tries to answer the historical question of how Christian faith arose, but he rejects that explanation because it involves an "incredible" event. Again, it can be seen that Bultmann has not interpreted the resurrection of Jesus, but neglected it.

It is clear that loyalty to his understanding of history, the activity of God, and Christian faith have led Bultmann to his interpretation of Easter; but how does this interpretation square with the New Testament itself? It has been shown that Bultmann has not as yet interpreted (demythologized) the Resurrection narratives; indeed, he shows very little interest in them at all. They are for Bultmann legendary concretizations of the earlier Easter faith which disclosed the meaning of the cross of Christ. His negative criticism of the narratives and lack of interest in them are products of his already developed understanding of history and the activity of God.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 41.

In closing, it must be noted again that there exists for Bultmann an historical problem to which he has not yet addressed himself. This is the fact that the earliest Christian kerygma of the Church did not proclaim the significance of the cross, but it was the resurrection of Jesus which formed the basis of their preaching. Although he clearly saw that there are existential results from Easter faith for the man of faith, he has not allowed that the Easter results were based upon an Easter event which for the early Church was a separate event from the cross. Bultmann's failure to interpret correctly the kerygma at this point can be directly related to his excess of confidence in the historical method which has been shown repeatedly throughout this discussion.

Because he has adopted this concept of history, which all will agree is completely foreign to that of the biblical writers,¹⁰⁴ it is inevitable that his conclusions regarding the Easter event will not be in line with those of the biblical writers.

Bultmann's concern for communicating his faith to modern man has rightly forced him to examine his understanding of history, but he has chosen to follow that contemporary understanding of history which views all events of history in an unbroken chain of cause and effect events. The results of this procedure upon his interpretation of Easter and Christian origins are significant. He found that he could no longer center faith upon a mythological event or figure of history. That was no longer an option for him. On the other hand, he knew quite well from the labors of his predecessors that the "Jesus of history," i.e., the Jesus whom the historian could recon-

¹⁰⁴This view of history will be examined in detail in Chapter V.

struct from the past also was an inadequate basis for Christian faith. What is the alternative in this dilemma? Bultmann chose to reinterpret the mythology of the New Testament in terms of existentialist categories. In doing this he chartered a new and radical course for theology. He argued that what the writers of the New Testament intended by the myth they wrote was to convey a new self-understanding. For this reason Bultmann believes that it is proper to interpret the myth existentially. The result of this procedure, however, as has been shown, has not been to clarify the message of the New Testament, but to clothe it in further obscurity.

For the above reasons, it is imperative that the problems which history poses for Christian faith be re-examined and a way found which will allow for a meaningful confession in the risen Lord. This will be done in part in Chapter V. It is also necessary to re-examine the Easter traditions and to find a path through them which will lead to a more meaningful understanding of Christian origins as well as do justice to the New Testament kerygma. This task is not an easy one; but if the presentation of Christian faith is to be meaningful to modern man and yet faithful to its biblical traditions, one must again approach and make some sense of the narratives of the resurrection of Jesus. In the next chapter Bultmann's understanding of the Resurrection narratives will be presented together with an alternative interpretation of their basic message.

Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1951-2, II, 95.

Certainly, as will be shown, there are a number of confusing problems in the narratives which don't harmonize; but are these so great, as Bultmann would claim, as to take away from the central message each evangelist is presenting in his narrative? This question will be discussed more fully in Chapters VI and VII.

BULTMANN AND THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVES

Although Bultmann claims that the Resurrection narratives are filled with legend and myth, he does not dismiss them altogether; and in many of his works he expresses his views on the narratives, mentioning especially their problems of harmony and their possible origin. For the purpose of understanding the origins of Easter faith, however, he states quite plainly that the Resurrection narratives are at such odds with each other that only confusion could arise; and, in fact, the Resurrection narratives are of little help whatever in explaining how Easter faith arose.¹ In light of this, it would be helpful to see if Bultmann derives this understanding from a careful investigation of the New Testament or from his historical assumptions.²

In this chapter the center of discussion will be directed toward the basic question of what the Resurrection narratives say about the origins of Easter faith, but the examination here is also intended to provide a basis for understanding some of the difficult problems in the narratives which will be discussed in more detail in Chapters VI and VII. This analysis of the Easter traditions will examine the origins and lines of development within these traditions as well as the primary message of each. After this, special atten-

¹Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1970-1, I, 45.

²Certainly, as will be shown, there are a number of confusing problems in the narratives which defy harmonization; but are these so great, as Bultmann would claim, as to take away from the central message each evangelist is presenting in his narrative? This question will be discussed more fully in Chapters VI and VII.

tion will be given to the empty tomb and appearance stories with a view toward answering some of Bultmann's negative criticisms of the Resurrection narratives.

The following discussion will begin first of all with a focus on each of the primary Resurrection traditions beginning with I Corinthians 15, then the Synoptics, and concluding with John. After that an attempt will be made to analyze the Easter traditions in light of their two primary kinds of narratives, *i.e.*, stories centered around the empty tomb and stories of the appearances.

I. I CORINTHIANS 15

It is commonly accepted by most scholars that the brief Resurrection narrative in I Corinthians 15 is the earliest account of the Resurrection appearances of Jesus and the most important Easter testimony of the early Christian Church in the New Testament. I Corinthians 15 was written earlier than any of the Gospels although, as Ulrich Wilckens argues, it by no means follows that this passage is earlier in its historical origins than, say, the traditions behind Mark 16:1-8. He believes that this passage, excluding verse 8b, is the oldest Easter testimony, not only from a literary standpoint, but also from the point of the history in the tradition.³ Be that as it may, one is certainly on a more sure footing by claiming that the Pauline tradition in I Corinthians 15 is the oldest written account of the resurrection of Jesus,⁴ and in it Paul presents a tradition

³Ulrich Wilckens, "The Tradition-history of the Resurrection of Jesus," The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, ed. by C. F. D. Moule, London, 1968, p. 71.

⁴This is true, unless of course one includes the very early kerygmatic statements in the New Testament, *e.g.*, I Thess. 1:10, Rom. 10:9, Gal. 1:1, *etc.*, of the resurrection of Jesus. Such passages,

(παράδοσις) which he received (παρέλαβον) and passed on to the Corinthians prior to the writing of that epistle (15:1-3). The Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον, vs. 1) which Paul preached to the Corinthians and which he himself received is found in verses 3-5, though it may have included parts of verses 6-8.⁵ In this rather brief summary of the Gospel, Paul omits several aspects found in the later Gospel Resurrection narratives, chiefly, the empty-tomb stories and the appearance of Christ to the women/woman;⁶ and because of this Bultmann is led to conclude that the later Resurrection narratives found in the Gospels were expanded into their present form to meet the apologetic needs of the growing Christian community, e.g., the story of the guard at the tomb, Matthew 27:62-66; 28:4, 11-15.⁷ At any rate, because this passage was quite clearly written by Paul, and because

however, are not so much accounts or narratives of the resurrection of Jesus as they are early proclamations which were used perhaps in catechetical instruction. R. Brown classifies these as "one-member" formulas in which only the resurrection of Jesus is indicated and not the preliminaries such as his death or burial. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, New York, 1973, p. 78.

⁵The use of ὅτι and the balanced structure in vv. 3-5, i.e., "that Christ died," "and that he was buried," "and that he was raised," "and thathe appeared," indicate that at least this much was in mind when Paul spoke of the Gospel and the tradition which he received. It could be that Paul's use of καί here (vv. 3-5) and its cessation after vs. 5 indicates that this is all Paul had in mind; but the presence of εἴτα . . . ἔπειτα . . . εἴτα . . . ἔπειτα in vv. 5-7 probably indicates that the tradition to which he is referring should include these verses too (though they may well be another tradition which the Apostle is combining with vv. 3-5). Probably the ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ ἐκοιμήθησαν of vs. 6 was not a part of the tradition/traditions handed down to Paul.

⁶The Gospels make no mention of the appearance to the "above 500 brethren" to which Paul refers here or to the appearance to James either. This might indicate that the tradition which Paul received included only vv. 3-5 which is found in narrative form in all four Gospels. More will be said about this in Chapter VII.

⁷Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. by John Marsh, Oxford, 1968, pp. 290-1.

it undoubtedly has roots in a primitive Christian tradition earlier than Paul,⁸ it is a helpful indicator of the basic understanding of the resurrection of Jesus in the early Christian community.⁹ Using the Book of Acts as a guide, most scholars date the writing of I Corinthians somewhere between A.D. 52 and A.D. 56 or 57.¹⁰ By accepting the Acts estimate for the length of Paul's ministry in Ephesus (19:8, 10), it is possible to date the epistle somewhere around the spring of A.D. 55.¹¹ Hans von Campenhausen, however, accepts a date of around A.D. 56 to 57 and adds that Paul received the tradition (vv. 3-8) as early as five to ten years from the time of the event itself.¹² He reasons that this tradition was taught to the Corinthians earlier and was the foundation pillar of Paul's preaching wherever he preached. He adds that this tradition is not

⁸Hans von Campenhausen believes that Paul "received" it within five or ten years from the event itself. Cf. Hans von Campenhausen, Tradition and Life in the Church, trans. by A. V. Littledale, London, 1968, p. 44.

⁹This does not necessarily mean that Paul's theology of the resurrection body expressed in this chapter is a product of the earliest Christian Church, but only that the tradition which Paul calls upon for support of his argument in I Corinthians 15, i.e., the message that the dead do rise and have a bodily existence after death, precedes Paul and goes back to an earlier time than when Paul wrote this passage. Bultmann is convinced that there is a clear break between the earliest Church in Palestine and the one established on Hellenistic soil subsequently. This "break" is basically in theology, and he contends that Paul's theology "... is a new structure, and that indicates nothing else than that Paul has his place within Hellenistic Christianity." Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 189.

¹⁰Robert M. Grant accepts the earlier of these dates (cf. A Historical Introduction to the New Testament, London, 1963, pp. 172-3), and Hans von Campenhausen suggest the latter (von Campenhausen, loc. cit.).

¹¹S. M. Gilmour, "First Corinthians," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, New York, 1962, I, 692.

¹²von Campenhausen, loc. cit.

only an old one, but also a long-formed one probably formalized for purposes of preservation.¹³ If this is so, then it can be argued that at a fairly early date the kerygma of the early Church was formed and passed on in either oral or written form. That this form was a well-fixed tradition of the early Church can also be implied from (1) the use of $\sigma\tau\iota$ in verses 3-5 which elsewhere points to traditional kerygma (e.g., Romans 10:9, 10), and (2) from the parallel structure of verses 3-7¹⁴ which shows signs of possible liturgical use in the early churches.

Most scholars have also seen the crucial importance of this passage not only because it points to the earliest understanding of the Easter event, but also because it is the only narrative in the New Testament written by one who claims to be an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus. Bultmann, too, has seen the significance of this passage for a discussion of the resurrection of Christ and has in part given his interpretation of it in his critique of Karl Barth's book on I Corinthians as well as in several places in his Theology of the New Testament. Viewing the chapter as a whole, Bultmann correctly sees that Paul's primary focus is upon the reality of the Christian's existence before God.¹⁵ Bultmann also recognizes the

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Notice the balance in vv. 3-5, "died . . . buried, raised . . . appeared." Each of the four verbs is introduced by $\sigma\tau\iota$, and the last three verbs are joined with the preceding statement by $\kappa\alpha\iota$. Notice, too, that the appearances come first to Peter, then the twelve, followed by the five hundred. Then, as if to start another unit, Christ appears to James, then to all the apostles, followed by Paul. Were there two basic groups of appearances: to Peter then to the twelve, and to James then the other apostles? Is Paul linking together two well-known appearance traditions here?

¹⁵Rudolf Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, ed. by Robert W. Funk, trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith, London, 1966, pp. 81-2.

importance of the development of Paul's argument from the kerygmatic section of this chapter in verses 1-11, i.e., because Christ is risen, the believer too can look forward to a resurrected existence before God.¹⁶ Unlike Barth however, Bultmann argues that Paul is trying to establish in verses 3-8 the resurrection of Christ as a historical fact, and in so doing he betrays himself and is in a basic conflict with his clear insight into the nature of Christian faith.¹⁷ Bultmann says that Paul tried to prove the resurrection of Christ by adducing witnesses and that this procedure is out of harmony with his argument in verses 20-22. "What Paul says in vv. 20-22 of the death and resurrection of Christ cannot be said of an objective historical fact."¹⁸ In another place Bultmann again calls Paul's line of reasoning here an inconsistency with his otherwise basic insight into the kerygmatic structure of faith because the Apostle tries to ". . . guarantee the resurrection of Jesus by the enumeration of witnesses, as if it were an historically visible fact" ¹⁹

¹⁶In vv. 12-16 Paul is arguing against the view held by some of the Corinthians that the dead do not rise; and he tells them that if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen, and if Christ is not risen, then their faith is in vain. Obviously the resurrection of Christ was not at issue in the Corinthian church, but the resurrection of the dead in general was. Paul then argues (vv. 17-23) that if Christ is not raised, they have nothing; but because he is risen from the dead, they too will have a meaningful existence before God. Vv. 33, ff. indicate that this existence will be a bodily one, albeit, a transformed bodily existence. All of this hope for the Christian, however, is based on the truthfulness of the Gospel, that Christ is risen.

¹⁷Bultmann, op. cit., p. 83. ¹⁸Ibid., pp. 83-4.

¹⁹Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., II, 127. Rudolf Schnackenburg believes that Bultmann's comments here are "more than a little suspicious," especially as this passage (vv. 3-8) is enhanced since it is the earliest evidence for the primitive Christian understanding of Easter faith available today. Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Christology and Myth," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, London, 1962, II, 334-5.

Hugh Anderson disagrees with Bultmann's interpretation of these verses and argues that Paul is not trying to substantiate the resurrection of Jesus with a list of witnesses, but that Paul is trying to show that the Easter faith and kerygma ". . . are indissolubly linked to the Easter testimony of the original disciples, and so are bound to a fixed and circumscribed place in history and not to any hazy mythical realm."²⁰ Although Anderson's point is a valid one, and it can be argued from this passage that the Easter kerygma is firmly rooted in history and that this fact is for Paul important for Christian faith, still the apologetic element here remains and cannot be overlooked. The basic question in Paul's thinking, however, is not whether Christ is risen, but whether the dead rise. Paul strengthens his case by arguing that since Christ is risen from the dead--and there are many substantial witnesses (vv. 5-8) who could testify to this fact (and a fact which the Corinthians already believed as is seen in vv. 1, 2, 11) as well as the Scriptures themselves, how can "certain ones among you" (ἐν ὑμῖν τινες, vs. 12) say there is no resurrection of the dead? It is difficult to understand why Paul's list includes so many witnesses to this event, which not even the Gospels--all written later--found it necessary to include, if it were not to strengthen more effectively his case that the dead will indeed rise because Christ is risen.

It may also be possible, however, that Paul included the list because it had a very strong presence in the Easter tradition. It does appear that Paul's Easter message includes the witnesses (vv. 5-8), though it is doubtful whether certain aspects of his "list" would

²⁰Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, New York, 1964, p. 211.

have been mentioned if he were only trying to show that the Easter faith and message were rooted firmly in history, especially the ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι passage (vs. 6).

By strengthening his case for the resurrection of Jesus with respected, received and far-reaching testimony, Paul is arguing that there is a general resurrection of the dead; i.e., because Christ is risen, then those who are in Christ shall also rise to a transformed (resurrected) existence before God. At first glance, however, Paul appears to be saying that the resurrection of Christ depends upon the general resurrection of the dead. He writes, ". . . but if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ has not been raised . . ." (v. 13). A closer look at the context will show, however, that this is not the case. His argument against those who would deny the general resurrection of the dead begins with the already accepted arguments for the resurrection of Christ (vv. 3-8, 11); and after the resurrection of Christ is established or their earlier acceptance of it is recalled (vs. 11), Paul builds his case for the resurrection of the believer. To the statement, "the dead do not rise," Paul says that they in fact do rise because Jesus is risen from the dead (vv. 20, ff.). However, Paul does entertain for the moment the consequences of there being no resurrection of the dead. First, Christ is not risen, and consequently, Christian faith is vain (vv. 12-19).²¹ But he counteracts this negative type of thinking by saying that Christ is risen, the dead do rise, and therefore the believers' future existence is secure.

²¹Evidently for Paul, existence apart from the body, i.e., after this life, is no existence at all and is not a hope for the Christian. This is certainly an indication of the Jewish influences upon Paul.

Karl Barth, eager to maintain the supra-historical character of revelation, rejected an apologetic interpretation of I Corinthians 15:3-8 and argued that Paul gave the list of witnesses only to prove that he and these respected witnesses were in basic agreement regarding the Gospel message.²² Barth contends that Paul was defending himself against the criticism that he was preaching "Paulinism," and he was arguing that the Gospel of the original Christian community was no different than his.²³ R. H. Fuller agrees with Barth on this point and suggests that the reason Paul tacked on his list of witnesses to the kerygma--contrary to the pattern found in the earliest forms of the kerygma (e.g., I Thessalonians 1:9 but cf. Luke 24:34!) --was to identify his gospel with that of the earliest disciples.²⁴ This identity, Fuller claims, also substantiates Paul's claim to be an apostle along with the apostles in Jerusalem.²⁵ He further states that the Corinthian "gnostics" who held that there was no future resurrection of the dead were claiming that they had apostolic support, e.g., "I am of Cephas," (I Cor. 1:12; 3:4). They held that there was no further need of the "not yet" anticipation of the end, but Paul was trying to show them that Christ's resurrection was right at the heart of the eschatological scheme, and the other apostles were in basic agreement with him.²⁶ The future was not already real-

²²Karl Barth, The Resurrection of the Dead, trans. by H. J. Stenning, London, 1933, pp. 132, ff.

²³Ibid., p. 139.

²⁴Reginald H. Fuller, The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives, London, 1972, p. 29.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 29-30. Perhaps it should be noted here that the reason Paul can place the appearances of Jesus to the apostles on the

ized, but could be anticipated because of God's activity in Christ (I Cor. 15:20, 21). The resurrected life was yet future for the Christian (15:51, ff.), and it would be entered in a new mode of existence (vv. 35-50). The resurrection of Christ did not do away with the future; indeed, his Resurrection stands in the main stream of eschatological events and is the source of the Christian's hope for entering into the end time itself (15:23, 24; Rom. 8:9-11). The resurrection of Christ in Paul is not therefore an isolated event, but the first-fruits of the eschatological event itself, i.e., the resurrection from the dead. Ladd expresses it correctly when he writes:

Paul makes it clear that the resurrection of Jesus was an eschatological resurrection (I Cor. 15:23). First fruits is more than promise or hope; it is actual realization. The resurrection of Christ was an event in history, but it was not an "historical" event in the sense that it could be explained by antecedent historical events. It was an eschatological event. In the resurrection of Jesus, a piece of eschatology was split off from the end of the world and planted in the midst of history.²⁷

Barth and Fuller have an important point about this passage, and it is one to which Bultmann has unfortunately given little attention.²⁸ Paul certainly appears to defend his apostleship in this

same plane with his Damascus Road revelation is as Oscar Cullmann has said, ". . . because in both Christ is directly at work." Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church, London, 1965, p. 69. Robert M. Grant agrees with this when he says that Paul, in developing his argument about the resurrection of the dead, ". . . relies on the unity of apostolic testimony not about the nature of the resurrection appearances but about the fact that Christ was raised from the dead." Grant, op. cit., p. 373.

²⁷George Eldon Ladd, "Apocalyptic and New Testament Theology," Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology, ed. by Robert Banks, Grand Rapids, 1974, p. 294. For references to the connection of the resurrection of the believers to that of Christ, see Rom. 6:4-11; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12, ff.; Eph. 2:1, 5; II Cor. 4:10, ff.; I Pet. 1:3.

²⁸The least that this passage could show is that Paul's theology, rooted in the Hellenistic Church (cf. Bultmann, Theology

passage (vv. 9, 10), and what better way to do it than to show that that which is shared by the leaders in the Church in Palestine is also shared by him, i.e., his message (v. 11) that Jesus who was crucified and buried is now living and that he [Paul] too has received an appearance from the Risen Christ.²⁹ Again, in Galatians 2:6-10, Paul takes the time to tell his readers that those leaders in Jerusalem were in basic agreement with him in regard to the Gospel which he preached. It was, therefore, important to Paul that others recognize that he was not in conflict with the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem. However, this view does not fully account for Paul's emphasis in I Corinthians 15. Although most of the verbs in verses 3-8 are passives, the emphasis of this section is upon the active ministry of the Risen Christ in his appearances to this particular list of witnesses, many of whom were "still alive" when Paul wrote (vs. 6). This passage (vv. 3-8) does not appear to be so much of a defense of Paul's apostleship³⁰--even though such secondary motives cannot be completely discredited--or of a claim of unity between his preaching and that of the leaders of Jerusalem as it is a case for the resurrection of Christ from the dead which is attested to by Scripture and eye-witness testimony. The resurrection of Christ is a fulfillment

of the New Testament, op. cit., I, 189), is not different in any way at this point from the theology of leaders of the Church in Jerusalem. The understanding of the kerygma was the same in both locations, and Paul directly (or indirectly) shows that in this passage.

²⁹It should be added here that Paul is not relying on apostolic testimony regarding the nature of the resurrection of Jesus, as some try to prove from his use of the word ᾠφθην, but only the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. Cf. Grant, op. cit., p. 373.

³⁰Notice the clear distinction between this passage and Gal. 1:1, 11-ff.; 2:6-ff. or even I Cor. 9:1 where Paul is strongly defending his apostleship and the authority of his gospel to the Gentiles.

of Scripture, i.e., "according to the Scripture" (vv. 3, 4);³¹ but Paul argues it is also testified to by eyewitnesses. The dead shall rise because Christ is risen from the dead, and the leaders in the Church at Jerusalem and Paul himself can confirm the appearance of the risen Christ, i.e., "He is risen, just ask these people." That which introduces each witness or group of witnesses in this passage is $\omega\phi\theta\eta$,³² which is certainly where the emphasis of this brief passage is to be found. Because of this, the interpretation which places the appearances of Christ in primary focus will probably be more in line with what Paul had intended here.

The various attempts to show that Paul was not seeking support for the fact of the resurrection of Christ by adding this rather lengthy list of witnesses appear to be only partially satisfying. No doubt the list of appearances was in some way closely connected to the Easter message, especially the appearance to Peter;³³ however, Paul has clearly expanded this tradition to serve his own argument against the Corinthians who denied the resurrection of the dead.³⁴

³¹For further discussion of this, see Chapter VII, Section 4.

³²This term itself will be discussed later in Chapter VI.

³³Except in Matthew, all of the Resurrection narratives either emphasize or at least mention the priority of Peter in their stories of the appearances. Luke 24:34 seems to be a clear indication that the earliest Easter message included an appearance to Peter. Prior to this verse, there is only the single mention of Peter in 24:12 with no appearance or statement of faith recorded. Because there is no further mention of Peter in the passage, it is doubtful whether Luke would have mentioned him in 24:34 without a prior development of the appearances unless this was a strong element in the early Easter traditions.

³⁴Bultmann believes that Paul misunderstood the Corinthians in this passage because he accuses them of believing that with death everything is over (vv. 19, 32); however, he contends that vs. 29 shows this to be a mistake on Paul's part. The Corinthians were only against a realistic teaching of the resurrection as taught by the

Bultmann is correct in his contention that I Corinthians 15 has an apologetic motif, but he fails to appreciate the fact that Paul's arguments are directed toward erring Christians and not toward critical historians. He rightly sees that Paul uses two kinds of "proofs" of the resurrection which were current in the early Church, namely, (a) testimony of eyewitnesses (vv. 5-8; cf. Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 10:40, ff.) and (b) discovered agreements with the Old Testament, i.e., "according to the Scriptures" (vs. 4; cf. Lk. 24:27, 44; Acts 2:30, ff.; 13:34, ff.);³⁵ however, the kind of proof which Paul is setting forth is the kind which would appeal to Christians, not to unbelievers let alone modern historians. Admittedly, this line of defense was used before the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:25-36), but Paul is appealing in this instance to erring Christians, not to pagan Greeks. While it is true that the Jews in Palestine may have been impressed by various Scriptural "proofs" as well as the availability of the eyewitnesses of the Resurrection for questioning, the message which was preached to them still demanded the obedience of faith to bring about salvation (Acts 2:37-44).³⁶ The Jews could not verify the early Christians' interpretation of the

Jewish and primitive Christian tradition. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 169. Bultmann adds that Paul in II Cor. 5 is better informed of the problem at Corinth, and he combats the Gnostic's view of man's separation from the body at death. Ibid. However, it is difficult to follow Bultmann here primarily because in I Cor. 15 Paul is trying to teach the Jewish and early Christian understanding of the resurrection both of Jesus and of all believers, namely, that it is a bodily resurrection. Cf. vv. 35, ff. Paul is arguing that there is no existence apart from a bodily existence before God, and his chief reason for saying that there is a bodily existence after death is because Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead.

³⁵Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 82.

³⁶Although this passage emphasizes repentance and submission to baptism for salvation (or the gift of the Holy Spirit), vs. 41

Old Testament; they could only accept it or reject it, for surely an independent examination of the Old Testament would not have supplied very many of the proof texts for the resurrection of Jesus or for his uniqueness which the early Christians claimed. Their interpretation of the Old Testament was entirely new based almost completely upon their new faith in the Risen Lord. After faith in the resurrection of Christ, the early Christians found Scriptures almost everywhere which would substantiate their new-found faith.³⁷ Again, the Jews could only accept it or reject it. Since the Resurrection appearances were not repeatable for critical observation, an inquirer would have little to go on except what the witnesses said about them. Since these experiences which the witnesses had with the Risen Christ could not be further duplicated, the basis of decision could not therefore be founded upon incontrovertible evidence. The hearer of this proclamation about Jesus still had to submit himself by faith to what was being preached (I Cor. 15:11).

In Paul's situation, however, his hearers were Christians who were in error concerning the believer's future existence before God. The kinds of "proof" which he used were those which would naturally have impressed Christians. Their high regard for the Old Testament is obvious throughout the New Testament;³⁸ and the list of witnesses, except perhaps for the five hundred brethren, appear to be among the most respected testimony of the early Church, e.g., Peter, the

says that the people "received his /Peter's/ word," and vs. 44 indicates that they "believed."

³⁷Neville Clark, Interpreting the Resurrection, London, 1967, pp. 44-ff.

³⁸This can be seen in the frequent appeal to the Old Testament for support of a particular theological argument by the various New Testament writers.

Twelve, James, and all the apostles. Paul makes no defense of anyone on that list except for himself (vv. 9, 10). Peter was clearly held in high esteem in the Church at Corinth (1:12 would indicate this much) as well as the rest of those on the list since Paul takes little time either to introduce them or defend them. If Paul were trying to set forth a case for the resurrection of Jesus to a group of pagan hearers, he would surely have spent more time on his defense. Also, were Paul not trying to communicate to Christians, his line of argument in verses 20-22 would indeed be, as Bultmann claims it is, a contradiction in his apologetic. For, as Bultmann says, what Paul writes of the death and resurrection of Christ in verses 20-22 could not be said of ". . . an objective historical fact."³⁹ Paul's argument is "kerygmatic" in nature and clearly cannot be substantiated as historical fact, but it is because Paul was speaking to Christians that this line of "kerygmatic reasoning" or argument could be acceptably used in the Corinthian Church.⁴⁰

³⁹Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, op. cit., p. 84.

⁴⁰Perhaps it would be appropriate to state here that there is no unanimity of opinion among scholars on who the Corinthians were or exactly who Paul's opponents were. Were they Palestinian Gnostics as Walter Schmithals would have it? Walter Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, trans. by John E. Steely, New York, 1971, pp. 296-301. Most scholars would agree that there were at least clear gnosticizing tendencies in the Corinthian Church at the time Paul was writing. Reginald H. Fuller, A Critical Introduction to the New Testament, London, 1971, pp. 43-5. What it was that Paul's opponents believed about the resurrection of Jesus is not altogether clear, especially since they denied the resurrection from the dead. They already accepted the belief that Jesus had been resurrected, but did they believe that it was in bodily form? Their denial of the resurrection from the dead (ἐκ νεκρῶν) makes the question an important one especially since Jesus' aliveness after death is not in question (vs. 11) and the nature of the resurrected body is (vv. 35, ff.). It would seem that Paul's opponents were not objecting to life after death itself, but life after death in a bodily form and also that resurrected life is already a present reality (I Cor. 4:8). They had robbed the future of the resurrection and spiritualized it in their present circum-

Paul then is not trying to set forth an "air tight" argument capable of scientific or historical verification. Such notions were foreign to him. Because what Paul reports is beyond the general historical credibility of what is normally expected to occur after death, and because Paul's witnesses to this event cannot be cross-examined, one must choose to accept or reject his arguments, not so much on critical grounds, but in spite of them. One is called upon to believe something which is not only beyond the historian's experience but also beyond his field of investigation.⁴¹ This event is the kind which is accepted by faith, not verified by reason. The critical historian cannot discover through Paul's witnesses or arguments in I Corinthians 15 what happened on the first Easter morning, only that a group of men came to believe that something unique happened. It would appear that the historian, if he were to examine the authenticity of this event, would have to expand the limits of what he generally understands to be credible statements and to revert back to a "scissors and paste" method of examining history by accepting the conclusions handed to him by his sources. Neither of these options are possible for him if he is to maintain any self-respect as a modern historian. He may rule against the event a priori, that miracles do not occur, or confess that he cannot say for sure what happened; but he cannot accept the credibility of an event like the Resurrection without significantly affecting the rational processes

stance of life. The first of these problems--rejection of a future bodily existence--probably gave rise to the latter. Paul, on the other hand, cannot accept any form of life after death unless it is in the form of a bodily existence. Consequently for Paul, to deny the bodily resurrection from the dead meant to deny Christian faith itself.

⁴¹See Chapter V, Sections 6 and 7.

of his trade.⁴² The critical historian cannot, therefore, discover what happened on the first Easter morning chiefly because his sources are not the kind that could enable him to establish anything more than the fact that a group of men came to believe that a fantastic event took place. Wolfhart Pannenberg believes that it was Paul's intention to give a credible argument for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus;⁴³ but he, too, fails to appreciate the makeup of Paul's hearers as well as the kerygmatic style of defense which Paul uses in verses 20-22. Pannenberg believes that the case for the resurrection of Jesus can be demonstrated historically and argues that faith could not accept the Resurrection otherwise:

If, however, historical study declares itself unable to establish what "really" happened on Easter, then all the more, faith is not able to do so; for faith cannot ascertain anything certain about events of the past that would perhaps be inaccessible to the historian.⁴⁴

However, if Pannenberg is right and Paul did try to prove the resurrection of Jesus as an historical event, it is amazing that Paul dealt so briefly with such a vital issue, i.e., in eleven short verses! But Pannenberg's contention cannot be accepted especially since Paul clearly states that the Corinthians already believed (ἐπιστεύσατε) his Gospel which he preached (vs. 11). Now, since they had already believed the Gospel, Paul's line of argumentation is focused primarily on another subject which was very important for Christians: the nature of their future existence before God, i.e.,

⁴²How the Christian can accept as fact what the historian classifies as incredible will be discussed more completely in Chapters V and VIII of this thesis.

⁴³Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, trans. by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, London, 1970, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 109.

that it is bodily. To do this he necessarily begins with the resurrection of Christ which, though attested to by witnesses, supported by Scripture and vital to the future existence of the Christian, is not the focus of the passage. Indeed, this fact was already believed by Paul's hearers.

Bultmann is correct in saying that Paul is trying to prove a case, but he does not focus on the proper question to which Paul was addressing himself. Moreover, he fails to take more seriously the audience to whom Paul was writing. Although Paul describes the resurrection of Christ as an event of history ("the third day," vs. 4), he means that something occurred in time and space in history and not that it could necessarily be proved scientifically by a modern historian. Such technical terms and the critical concepts behind them obviously meant very little to the biblical writers. Bultmann rejects this whole line of thinking, however, because for him God does not act in history in unique or supernatural events. Along with that, Bultmann believes that all events of history are capable of historical verification or argumentation by the critical historian. He also rejects the notion that Christian faith accepts as true any supernatural or miraculous events of the past, but he believes that Christian faith means that one should submit himself in obedience to the Word which is preached. Bultmann is certainly correct in his understanding of Christian faith, but is it possible to submit oneself to a proclamation which speaks about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and at the same time to reject this notion as an impossibility? Again, one must ask the question whether it is possible to accept something which is theologically true, but at the same

time historically false.⁴⁵

Perhaps before closing this section, it should be said in passing that Bultmann believes Paul's lack of reference to the empty tomb in I Corinthians 15 proves that he knew nothing of that tradition.⁴⁶ Whether or not he is correct in making this statement, however, will not be discussed here but in the final section of this chapter when the significance of the empty tomb will be examined in more detail.

Further comment on this passage will be made in the final section of this chapter and again in Chapter VII.

II. THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES⁴⁷

Mark

In the opening paragraphs of his History of the Synoptic Tra-

⁴⁵Of course this question may be raised of other biblical events such as the Ascension which expresses more the exaltation and Lordship of Christ than necessarily a physical parting from the earth. (It is still possible that a final appearance was given to the disciples and the Ascension draws attention to the end of all such appearances even though this does not appear to be the primary reason for Luke's story of this event.) However, if the resurrection of Jesus did not occur and his aliveness was not manifested to his disciples, the origins of Christianity are to be located in the apostles' expressions of faith rather than in the risen Christ himself. It seems to this writer that there is a significant difference in one's freedom to disassociate Christianity from its faith in the aliveness of Jesus--a minimum ground for faith--and in the freedom to express the Ascension in Luke in symbolic terms. In the latter what is intended seems clear, and other New Testament writers expressed the same truth in several different ways (as in Rom. 1:2-4; Matt. 28:20, John 7:39, Heb. 1:3-10). But in the former case, the Evangelists and Paul all express it the same way: God raised up Jesus from the dead. His Lordship, or recognition of his Lordship, is directly related to this event. Can this be denied and yet his Lordship still be affirmed? It seems doubtful.

⁴⁶Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁷Much of what is said here will be taken from Bultmann's History of the Synoptic Tradition, op. cit.; and because of the frequent

dition, Bultmann accepted Wrede's proposal for Synoptic research by starting with Mark (HST, p. 1). He believes with Wrede that Mark's gospel is the work of an author who:

. . . is steeped in the theology of the early Church, and who ordered and arranged the traditional material that he received in light of the faith of the early Church (Ibid.)

The task of biblical research is, for Bultmann therefore, to separate the "various strata" in the Gospels (starting with Mark), and in doing so to determine which belonged to the earliest tradition and which to the author himself (Ibid.). Using this approach, Bultmann has made several interesting observations about the Resurrection narratives in Mark and the other Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke. These will be examined briefly.

Many writers will agree with Bultmann that there are two primary Resurrection traditions. The first is I Corinthians 15:3-8 and the other is Mark 16:1-8. The first of these represents a tradition of Peter and the other disciples encountering the risen Christ; and the second (Mark 16:1-8) represents the women's discovery of the empty tomb. As was said earlier, it is difficult to say which is the earliest tradition historically especially because it cannot be demonstrated that the tradition of I Corinthians 15 is older than that found in Mark 16. At any rate, there is little dispute among scholars about which gospel ought to be mentioned first; and with this, some of Bultmann's comments on this passage will be examined.⁴⁸

references, the page numbers will simply be indicated in the body of the paper written in parentheses (HST, page number) rather than by footnote.

⁴⁸A good presentation of the case against Markan priority is found in William R. Farmer's The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis, New York, 1964. He calls into question not only the priority of Mark but also the existence of any "Q" document. His book is

Bultmann is correct when he calls Mark 16:9-20 a later addition to that Gospel. He says, however, that the original ending of Mark may very well have been dispensed with because it was not in accord with the later Easter reports (HST, loc. cit.). Bultmann admits that this is guess work, and some other explanation may be possible; but he believes, and this writer agrees, that the break at the end of 16:8 is an unnatural one and probably not the original ending of the Gospel. Although it is difficult to suppose what that original ending may have been--if indeed there was an ending which was lost, it is equally difficult to believe that the Gospel would end on a note of fear and silence. What kind of "good news" would that have been? The ending at 16:8 does not appear to be an appropriate ending. Perhaps Bultmann's explanation is correct, but there is also the possibility that the Gospel was never finished. If Mark were written as early as 64 A.D. or as late as 70 A.D., it would still be in the heart of strong persecution, and it is possible that

commanding due to its extensive detail; however, it is very doubtful whether his arguments will have much influence in changing the dominant role of Markan priority among New Testament scholars. Joseph A. Fitzmyer in his article "The Priority of Mark and the 'Q' Source in Luke," Jesus and Man's Hope, ed. by David G. Buttrick, Pittsburgh, 1970, I, 131-70, gives a very lengthy and detailed discussion on the current status of the question of the priority of Mark and the existence of "Q." He tries to answer Austin Farrer and W. R. Farmer and reassert Markan priority as well as to give further support to the existence of "Q." Cf. also John Reumann's critique of Farmer's book in "Book Review," Dialog, 4:308-11, Autumn, 1965, for five strong arguments against Farmer's thesis that Matthew's Gospel was used by Luke and that Mark, who wrote last, used both Matthew and Luke. The following works have also dealt rather extensively with this study and are in favor of Farmer's position: B. C. Butler, The Originality of St. Matthew; A Critique of the Two-Document Hypothesis, Cambridge, 1951; J. H. Elliott, "The Synoptic Problem and the Laws of Tradition: A Cautionary Note," Expository Times, 82:148-52, February, 1961; Austin M. Farrer, "On Dispensing with Q," Studies in the Gospels, ed. by D. E. Nineham, Oxford, 1955, pp. 55-86; Theodore R. Rosche, "The Words of Jesus and the Future of the 'Q' Hypothesis," Journal of Biblical Literature, 79:210-20, September, 1960; E. P. Sanders, The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition, Cambridge, 1969.

death came to its author before he could finish his work. Another possible explanation is that the original ending may have been lost while the Gospel was circulating among the churches. If this is so, perhaps the original ending--or at least the general idea of it--could be partially discovered by comparing the endings of Matthew and Luke who depended so heavily upon Mark.⁴⁹ Admittedly, this kind of discussion is speculative; and so also is any view that Matthew and/or Luke may have used the "original" ending of Mark to any degree. What does seem certain, however, is that 16:9-20 was not the original ending of Mark⁵⁰ and that compared with the manner in which the other gospels close, *i.e.*, with praise, worship, and joy, it is not likely that the original gospel ended on such a note of fear and questioning as verse 8 indicates.⁵¹ Although it has been argued that ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ is an appropriate ending for Mark's Gospel,⁵² this writer believes

⁴⁹*I.e.*, it could be that if an original ending did exist, it may well have included appearances of the Risen Lord and a missionary charge to the disciples since these aspects are common in the other Gospels. It is also quite possible that the original ending of Mark --if there was one--was lost quite early since Matthew and Luke are significantly different from one another on the events of Easter, *e.g.*, the location of the appearances, *etc.* All of these possibilities are, in fact, simply hypotheses of greater or lesser probability; but what does not appear to be a viable option is that Mark concluded his Gospel at 16:8. In this Bultmann is probably correct.

⁵⁰B. M. Metzger notes that those verses are not supported by the two oldest Greek manuscripts (X and B), nor by the Old Latin codex Bezae Cantabrigiae (itk), the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, nearly 100 Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (A.D. 897 and A.D. 913). He also adds that neither Clement of Alexandria nor Origen show knowledge of the existence of these verses, and Eusebius as well as Jerome attest to absence of these verses in all the manuscripts known to them. Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, London, 1971, pp. 122-3.

⁵¹See R. H. Fuller, The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives, London, 1972, pp. 64-7.

⁵²See a careful discussion of this problem in R. H. Lightfoot, The Gospel Message of St. Mark, Oxford, 1950, pp. 80-97.

that the ending of a letter with γάρ, while not unknown,⁵³ is highly unusual. While γάρ and an accompanying word can end a sentence and frequently does, only one instance has ever been found where it finished a book; and there⁵⁴ it seems unintentional as is the case here. Although γάρ plus a verb, and nothing else, can form a complete sentence, it is rare that it ever forms the end of a book; and this construction appears nowhere else in Mark or the rest of the New Testament. Also, allowing the fact that Mark is the earliest Gospel and depended upon by both Luke and Matthew, it is amazing that their Gospels end on a note of victory; and this one does not if it is maintained that verse 8 is the intended conclusion. John also follows this pattern of ending on a note of victory.

Why would Mark not use the appearance stories and then close with the sound of triumph if such were known? R. H. Fuller is not convinced that such stories were known and suggests that the original Easter message did not narrate appearances, but proclaimed the Resurrection, i.e., He has been raised, "He is not here."⁵⁵ However, Fuller does not take into account seriously enough the importance of the appearance of Christ to his disciples for the initiation of Christian faith. Both in Paul and the Synoptic Gospels as well as in John, Jesus' appearances are included; and their importance cannot be underestimated. Notice even the indirect support given to the importance of the appearances by the manner in which a successor to Judas Iscariot was chosen (Acts 1:21, 22). Finally, Mark 16:9-20 and the

⁵³William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Chicago, 1957, p. 151.

⁵⁴Cf. Ps. Demetrius, Formae Epistolicae of the first century A.D. which ends with ὁφείλω γάρ.

⁵⁵Fuller, op. cit., p. 66.

other variant endings of Mark indicate that the Christian community which added this section also believed that the Gospel as it stands was incomplete; and they sought to close it in a more appropriate manner than was done in 16:8. For these reasons, the writer must conclude with Bultmann that the original ending of Mark's Gospel is not presently known. It was apparently lost at an early stage in its usage.

Along with the above, Bultmann also believes that the story of the women coming to the tomb on Easter morning is secondary, not a part of the original text of Mark (HST, p. 284). He reasons that the names of the women would not have been restated here after 15:40, 47 if this passage were original to the rest of the Gospel (*Ibid.*). He also adds that this story seems foreign to the context because the women's intention does not agree with 15:47 which suggests that the burial was complete (*Ibid.*). He further argues that it would have been impossible to embalm the body of Jesus after two nights and a day in the tomb (*Ibid.*).⁵⁶

Bultmann contends with Bousset that from the beginning the story of the women was an apologetic story of an empty tomb⁵⁷ and one which was not originally devised with the chronology of Mark's Gospel in mind (HST, p. 285n). He says the lack of forethought about moving

⁵⁶It must be stressed, however, that the intent of the women was not "to embalm" but "to anoint." 15:46, 47 only says that the body had a cloth placed over it, but nothing else. What was attempted by the women at this time was not an embalming process, but a simple act of devotion signified by an anointing--an act of honor. Cf. Heinrich Schlier, "ἀλείφω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, 1964, I, 229-30.

⁵⁷If this is so, however, one wonders why the story is dependent upon the testimony of the women. A more credible story at that time might have been the discovery of the empty tomb by men.

the stone (16:3) illustrates this point (Ibid.). He also claims that the two passages in 14:28 and 16:7 are footnotes put into the narratives by Mark from the tradition which has a purpose of preparing the way for a Galilean appearance of Jesus (Ibid.).

Bultmann is impressed with Mark's Resurrection narrative because of its reserve especially seen in its not recounting the appearances of the Risen Lord (HST, p. 286). He seems impressed with Mark's construction of the wondering of the women (vs. 3), their surprise at the stone being rolled away, and the appearance of the angel (vs. 4, ff.). Bultmann adds to this the masterful angelic announcement (vs. 6) and the shattering impressions of the women in verse 8 (Ibid.). He claims that this construction was expanded and developed further in Luke and Matthew, i.e., Luke expands the angelic saying, and Matthew gives an account of an appearance in Galilee. Bultmann says Matthew's reserved description of the miraculous occurrence and the appearance of Jesus to the women was later expanded in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter (Ibid.).

As it now stands, Mark's Resurrection narrative is one which indicates an empty tomb, the Risen Jesus, and the anticipation of an appearance to the disciples and to Peter in Galilee.⁵⁸ Further dis-

⁵⁸This writer does not follow Bultmann or Fuller when they claim that Mark 14:28 and 16:7 are redactional insertions into the tradition. For all of Fuller's arguments against these verses being a part of the original gospel (cf. Fuller, op. cit., pp. 53, 57-60), they all stand on the premise that prophecy does not happen. His major criticism seems to be that 14:28 is an ". . . obvious vaticinium ex eventu . . ." (Ibid., p. 60). This writer does not accept this assumption that prophesied events are always vaticinium ex eventu and especially at the point of the resurrection of Jesus. This is an unproven but almost always assumed principle of critical interpretation which this writer deems unwarranted. Does the possibility of prophecy offend critical scholars any more than the resurrection from the dead? Bultmann is more consistent here in his rejection of prophetic accounts than is Fuller. His assumption, of course, is that supernatural events do not happen.

cussion of this passage will follow in the concluding analysis.

Matthew and Luke

Bultmann has little to say about these two Gospels except by way of summary. He believes that of the other Easter stories⁵⁹ only Luke 24:13-35, the walk to Emmaus, has the character of a true legend (HST, p. 286). He finds this story strictly analogous to the type found in Genesis where God walks among men, and as soon as he is recognized as God he disappears (Ibid.). On the last appearance of Jesus in Matthew 28:16-20, Bultmann believes it conveys the characteristics of a cult legend designed to function as an instruction to baptize. He adds to this that the appearance in Luke 24:36-49 seems to be an edited passage having as its basis an older legend which Bultmann says included an appearance in Galilee (Ibid.).

Apart from these references, Bultmann has little else to say about the Resurrection narratives in Matthew and Luke except by way of comparison and contrast. Some of these references will be discussed in the concluding analysis of this section. In most of Bultmann's other works, however, including his Theology of the New Testament, he makes few comments about the Synoptic Gospels and reserves most of his time for a discussion of Paul and John. His chief criticism of the Synoptics has to do with their tendency to emphasize the unity of the historical Jesus and the Christ of the Christian proclamation, something which Bultmann is loath to do.⁶⁰ The problem in

⁵⁹Other than Mark 16:1-8.

⁶⁰Bultmann admits to a lack of continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the kerygma, but not between the earthly Jesus and the early proclamation. Rudolf Bultmann, "Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft am historischen Jesus," Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 24

Synoptic research for Bultmann is the tendency among scholars to legitimate the kerygma by combining historical reports and kerygmatic Christology. The Synoptics, unlike Paul and John, are interested in more than the simple "that" of Jesus and are concerned with the ". . . objective historicity of the kerygma."⁶¹

One of the major objections raised against Bultmann's understanding of the lack of ". . . any real material relationship . . ." between the historical Jesus and the Christian proclamation, as Norman Perrin poses the question, is that this view does not do justice to the New Testament. Perrin believes that Bultmann is correct in regard to Paul and John, but not necessarily so with regard to the Synoptic Gospels. He writes:

These Gospels proclaim the post-Easter kerygma as vigorously as any Epistle of Paul or the Gospel of John but do so in the form of historicizing narratives; they are, in fact, a strange mixture of kerygma and history. Moreover, it has been argued, if we take up the matter of the historical Jesus himself we find that he had already shattered the categories of the ancient Judaism to which Bultmann assigns him.⁶²

Perrin believes that Bultmann's limited interest in either the Synoptic traditions or in the relationship between the historical Jesus and the kerygma ignores too considerable a part of the New Testament proclamation.⁶³

Heidelberg, 1960, p. 8. He argues rather strongly for the discontinuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith when he says that the ". . . Christ of the kerygma is not a historical figure which could be continuous with the historical Jesus" (*Ibid.*). He admits, however, that without the historical Jesus, there would be no kerygma. The kerygma presupposes the historical Jesus, however much it may have mythologized his figure (*Ibid.*).

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 5

⁶²Norman Perrin, The Promise of Bultmann, Philadelphia, 1969, p. 97.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 98.

Perhaps one further point that Bultmann notes which is of some significance here is that there is a common occurrence of pairs in folk lore and also in the Bible (HST, p. 314, ff.). This, he says, can be seen in the two women at the tomb in Mark 16, Jesus' sending out of the disciples two by two (Mark 6:7, Luke 10:1), the two thieves on the cross (Mark 15:27), the two who appeared to Jesus in the transfiguration (Mark 9:4), the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13, ff.), etc. (Ibid.). Bultmann also points to the case of the number of angels at the tomb. In Mark there is one, but in Luke's Gospel there are two (Luke 24:5; Ibid., p. 315). He concludes that such examples, paralleled in other ancient literature, point to a popular folk motif which rests on the demands of comprehension or symmetry. He also raises the possibility that such uses of two may also indicate a mythological motif (Ibid., pp. 315-7). Whatever may be said of Bultmann's observation, undeniably the number two is a frequent number found in the Gospels; and it may indicate something not clearly spelled out in the text. It must be said, however, that Bultmann's observation of the number two found in the Gospel narratives, though interesting to be sure, does not necessarily prove his assertion that the stories point to folklore (Ibid., p. 315) or mythical motifs (Ibid., pp. 316-7). There could, however, be some theological significance involved--if this is what Bultmann calls a mythical motif?--as seems apparent in Luke's use of the number forty indicating the time of Jesus' resurrection appearances (Acts 1:3).⁶⁴

⁶⁴Anderson, op. cit., pp. 230-2. This will be discussed more in Chapter VII.

The Gospel of John

For Bultmann, the Gospel of John, the Johannine Epistles, and the Epistles of Paul form a kind of "Marcion canon" of the New Testament. These works, according to him, have strong Hellenistic influences and yet contain the best kerygmatic passages in the New Testament. He believes that both John and Paul emphasize the presentness of the kingdom of God in their preaching and disassociate themselves from any dependence upon the historical Jesus apart from his "thatness," i.e., his having come. Both in his commentary on John and in his Theology of the New Testament, Bultmann is ambitious in his attempts to show the influence of Gnostic dualism in the writing of John's Gospel, so much so that any exceptions to the Gnostic patterns he finds in John are frequently called "redactional glosses," the work of an "ecclesiastical editor," or "later interpolations."⁶⁵ Bultmann does not usually attempt to justify these pronouncements by means of textual criticism but by his understanding of John in terms of Gnostic dualism and realized eschatology.⁶⁶

four Before looking at John's Resurrection narrative more closely, a couple of remarks are in order. First of all, Bultmann is correct when he sees John 21 as a later ecclesiastical addition to the Gospel.⁶⁷ This is clear from the contents of that chapter and is generally accepted by most scholars today.⁶⁸ Secondly, it is almost

⁶⁵Cf. especially Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., II, 54, 56, 58-9, ff.

⁶⁶This will be seen presently in his treatment of John 5:28.

⁶⁷Rudolf Bultmann, The Gospel of John, ed. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches, Philadelphia, 1971, pp. 700-6.

⁶⁸Although few scholars would accept John 21 as a part of the

ironic that Bultmann, who rejects the empty-tomb tradition as being legendary and late, should appeal to John for a substantiation of his understanding of the kerygma. John is the only Gospel which expressly states that faith came as a result of seeing the empty tomb and the grave clothes!⁶⁹ Thirdly, one of the most important witnesses to belief in the resurrection of the body in John comes in chapter 5, verses 28, ff., which Bultmann, without justification or manuscript support, says is a product of later ecclesiastical editing.⁷⁰ Apart from Bultmann's assertion that John reduces future eschatology to present eschatology, there is no further justification for calling this passage late. Bultmann says 5:28 has been added by the editor of the Gospel in an attempt ". . . to reconcile the dangerous statements in vv. 24 f. with traditional eschatology."⁷¹ He argues that the $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ of verse 28 refers not to the following $\omicron\tau\iota$, but to verse 21 as a whole; however, it appears that Bultmann's main objection here is that John has not completely forsaken the eschatology which is dominant in the Synoptic Gospels. C. K. Barrett is right when he concludes:

There is no reason whatever for regarding vv. 28 f. as a

original Gospel, there is considerable value in this passage. It seems certain that it is an attempt to harmonize the location of the appearances and perhaps to reinstate Peter into the good graces of Jesus. It also shows signs of trying to correct a tradition about the death of John which had been mistakenly spread about. It is possible that the information here could be based on earlier sources of the Resurrection traditions than those followed in John's Gospel. In this sense then, it is possible that some of the information is quite old and ought not to be dismissed too easily. As van Daalen suggests, the purpose of the chapter may have been in part to preserve a strong tradition which the final editor of the Gospel thought worth preserving. Cf. D. H. van Daalen, The Real Resurrection, London, 1972, p. 34.

⁶⁹Cf. John 20:3-10. ⁷⁰Bultmann, op. cit., p. 261.

⁷¹Cf. Ibid.

supplement to the original Johannine discourse unless it is held incredible that John should have thought of resurrection and judgment under both present and future aspects.⁷²

Fourthly, it is Bultmann's contention that in John Jesus' death on the cross is his exaltation and glorification. Because of this, the resurrection of Jesus in John's Gospel ". . . cannot be an event of special significance."⁷³ He argues that, "No resurrection is needed to destroy the triumph which death might be supposed to have gained in the crucifixion."⁷⁴ However, it is interesting in light of this how the glorification or exaltation of Jesus ever came to be recognized if not by the resurrection of Jesus. Stepping aside for the moment from the difficult question of when the exaltation or glorification in John took place, obviously John felt more than the cross was involved in Jesus' exaltation; and he supplied the Resurrection narrative to complete the story. If Jesus were exalted on the cross,⁷⁵ it was not fully recognized until after the Resurrection, a fact which Bultmann does not adequately harmonize with his position. Pannenberg is more correct in saying that Jesus' death calls into question the validity of his claim, and it was the Resurrection which answered the question.⁷⁶ Jesus' disciples were exposed to a great deal of stress at his death, not a sense of triumph. Only after his Resurrection did the cross become a sign of victory rather than a symbol of defeat and despair. Bultmann, of course, admits that John narrates some "Easter-stories;" but the purpose of these, he argues,

⁷²C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, London, 1967, p. 219. Cf. also Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John, New York, 1970,

⁷³Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 56.

⁷⁴Ibid. ⁷⁵See John 13:31-33.

⁷⁶Pannenberg, op. cit., pp. 96, 109.

is to set forth a warning against taking them for more than they ought to be.⁷⁷ He claims that in the story about Thomas (20:24-28), Thomas is being reprimanded by Jesus for his lack of faith; and this makes it clear to him that these stories ought not to be taken as signs and pictures for Easter faith or as confessions of faith in Easter.⁷⁸ Reginald Fuller disagrees with Bultmann's understanding of John's use of the Resurrection stories and the Thomas story in particular. He argues:

The pronouncement of the Risen One in verse 29, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe," is not meant to discredit Thomas' faith or any faith which relies upon the resurrection appearances. It is concerned rather with the problem of the generation in which John wrote. They cannot see, as the apostles did, but can nevertheless believe precisely because of the word of those who have seen. The doubt of Thomas is intended to highlight the possibilities of faith for John's readers, not to condemn them.⁷⁹

Whatever else may be said of John's Easter stories, it hardly seems likely that he should follow a tradition here for the sake of a rebuke. A more weighty example of John's rejection of the Easter stories would have been his showing Easter faith in the disciples apart from the Resurrection.⁸⁰ Even in the story of the "other dis-

⁷⁷Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 56-7. Cf. also, Bultmann, The Gospel of John, op. cit., pp. 696.

⁷⁸Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, loc. cit.

⁷⁹Fuller, op. cit., p. 145.

⁸⁰John 19:35 (cf. 21:24) is an obvious redactional insertion. It indicates that faith before the Resurrection is a possibility, but this verse is inserted here to give weight to the preceding description of the death of Jesus. Barrett, op. cit., pp. 463-4. R. Brown admits this is a parenthetical passage, but it is not to be compared with 21:24. Cf. Brown, op. cit., pp. 947-8. Bultmann also believes vs. 35 is a late editorial addition to John's Gospel and has little to say about it. Cf. Bultmann, The Gospel of John, op. cit., pp. 11, 635. John 19:35 cannot, then, be used to argue for Christian faith apart from the resurrection of Christ.

ciple," believing on the basis of seeing the grave clothes in the empty tomb (John 20:2-10) points to a faith in a resurrected Christ. It is very unlikely then that John would repeat so many Easter stories only to say at their conclusion that they are unimportant and stress the wrong point.

Hugh Anderson's question regarding Bultmann's interpretation of John's Easter stories is certainly appropriate when he asks:

If Bultmann is correct, we may wonder why John took the trouble to record any Easter stories at all. Since in the body of his Gospel, he has dealt very freely with the tradition, it is improbable that in regard to his Easter narratives he should follow the main lines of the Synoptic tradition, only at the end to deny the validity of its concrete depictions by correcting them in the climax of the Thomas story.⁸¹

Again, if Bultmann is correct, it would then follow that John would have Jesus rebuke all who saw and believed, not just Thomas. From the time of the crucifixion, there are no reports of faith in the exalted Lord apart from sight. John is quick, however, to comfort his hearers who have never seen the exalted Risen Lord but yet have believed in him. Their faith is not lacking because they have not seen; and neither is the faith of Mary, the disciples, or even Thomas, lacking because they have. In verse 29a and 29b there is a contrast, but it is not between a state of blessedness and an inferior state. John wants to say that those who "have not seen" but believe are not inferior to those who have seen and believed. On the contrary, "Those who do not see are equal in God's estimation with those who did see and are even, in a certain way, nobler."⁸² Perhaps verse 29 does indicate a rebuke to Thomas for not having believed the

⁸¹Hugh Anderson, "The Easter Witness of the Evangelists," The New Testament in Historical and Contemporary Perspective, ed. by Hugh Anderson and William Barclay, Oxford, 1965, p. 53.

⁸²Brown, op. cit., p. 1049.

disciples' report, but there is no support here (vv. 24-29) to suggest that the appearance of Jesus to the disciples was unnecessary. The story of Thomas, then, is one which is expected to be of comfort to Christians of all ages, not a rebuke to those who have seen the Risen Lord.

This, of course, raises a further question of the nature of Christian faith altogether. It cannot be denied that the disciples' claim to faith in the Risen Lord Jesus stems from their having seen him after his Resurrection. But what kind of faith is this which operates on the basis of sight? Surely no faith would be required here at all. It would seem that the faith of all subsequent believers is qualitatively different from that of the earliest disciples; indeed, there is a difference between those who have seen and believed and those who have not seen yet also believe. Three things seem clear at this point: (1) The faith of the earliest disciples was initiated by sight, i.e., the Risen Lord appeared to them. (2) After a period of time such manifestations ceased.⁸³ (3) It is not possible to prove or deny the first disciples' claims of having seen the Risen Lord, yet Christian faith is intimately bound up with the disciples' testimony. The Church's faith is tied directly to the message of these early Christians concerning Jesus. The message they proclaimed about Jesus is the Church's kerygma. Their faith was initiated by sight, and the Church's faith is inseparably bound to the disciples' faith or encounter with the Risen Lord. In this sense the encounter of the first disciples became a part of the Church's kerygma. This is seen especially in the earliest proclamations of

⁸³I Cor. 15:8 indicates this much, and also the Ascension in Luke-Acts indicates that all such appearances ceased after a time.

the Gospel, e.g.,

That Christ died for our sins . . .
 that he was buried . . .
 that he was raised . . .
 that he appeared to Cephas (I Cor. 15:3-5.)

Also, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Luke 24:34). This combination of event and testimony is also carried on in the earliest speeches in the book of Acts, e.g., Acts 2:32; 4:32; 5:32, in which the eyewitness testimony is of great significance in the preaching. Bultmann agrees with this when he states that Easter faith cannot be separated from the faith of the first disciples nor be less exposed to risk because of it. He explains:

We cannot buttress our own faith in the resurrection by that of the first disciples and so eliminate the element of risk which faith in the resurrection always involves. For the first disciples' faith in the resurrection is itself part and parcel of the eschatological event which is the article of faith.

In other words, the apostolic preaching which originated in the event of Easter Day is itself a part of the eschatological event of redemption.⁸⁴

The eyewitness testimony and experience of the first disciples, therefore, is not to be looked upon as being separate from the kerygma itself, but is in fact a part of the proclamation of the Church. Those who knew the earthly Jesus before the Cross were in a unique relationship with him, and they also were afforded an experience with the Risen Lord Jesus which has not been duplicated throughout the Church's history. Those disciples enjoyed a unique experience which separates them from the rest of the Church and which the Church also confesses as a part of its proclamation. Now in light of this, can it be that the disciples' faith is more secure or blessed than that of those who have not seen? By no means. The

⁸⁴Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 42.

early Church, seeing this possible conclusion, says concerning those who saw and believed, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29).

Turning now to Bultmann's analysis of the appearance stories in 20:1-18, he claims that there are two competing episodes, *i.e.*, Mary at the tomb and the story of the two disciples, and that they were not originally combined in John.⁸⁵ He also argues that the burial story preceding this passage (19:38-42) does not prepare one for this passage but that it rather abruptly breaks in.⁸⁶ The problem of the disciples' not telling Mary of their finding (20:5-8) also suggests to him that there were two stories or traditions here originally and that John has set them down in this order perhaps to preserve the tradition on the priority of Peter or to point to the faith of the "other disciple" (verse 8). Bultmann rightly asks whether the story of the two disciples (Peter and supposedly John) was inserted into the story of Mary Magdalene.⁸⁷ Certainty about this matter cannot be supported here, but Bultmann does appear to be correct in his view that there are two independent stories which John has seen fit to introduce side by side. The stories probably do not form an original unity.

Before going on, it should be noted that Bultmann has also argued the point that in the story of the two disciples coming to the tomb, their faith was initiated by the empty tomb itself. Technically, however, John 20:5-8 shows that the believing (verse 8) was only to be found in the "other disciple"⁸⁸ and based on seeing the

⁸⁵Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, *op. cit.*, p. 681.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 680. ⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸See discussion in Chapter VI, pp. 274-7.

grave clothes, not an empty tomb.⁸⁹ Bultmann wants to make this story fit into the apologetic motifs about the empty tomb which he finds in the rest of the Gospel tradition, but nowhere do the Gospels ever say that the empty tomb in itself enlists faith in the disciples; it is the appearances of Jesus. Even the women must have the angels interpret the tomb for them before it becomes significant to them. The tomb, then, never in itself becomes the initiator of faith though certainly it later became a vehicle for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus.

Also, Bultmann argues that both Peter and "the other disciple" believed based on the presence of the empty tomb, but the story says that only one of the disciples believed, and it was after his having seen the grave clothes.⁹⁰ Bultmann says that John would have expressly stated that Peter did not believe if he in fact did not, but perhaps John does say Peter did not believe when he uses the third person singular in verse 8. Perhaps the stronger motif here is to show the faith of the "other disciple" in contrast to Peter. How much was believed at this point or what was believed is probably not as sure as Bultmann would have it, but in this context *πιστεύειν* no doubt refers to the resurrection of Jesus. Less certain, however, is Bultmann's claim that it refers to more than that.⁹¹

In the remaining part of this passage (vv. 11-18), a puzzling statement comes to Mary from Jesus after she recognizes him. Jesus tells her, "Stop clinging to me for I have not yet ascended to the

⁸⁹Bultmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 681, 684.

⁹⁰Vv. 6-8. The context leads one to believe that the "other disciple" saw what Peter had seen, *i.e.*, the grave clothes.

⁹¹Cf. Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 684.

Father" (vs. 17). In matters of harmony, it does not follow the parallel passage in Matthew 28:9 where the women seize Jesus' feet and worship him, at which time Jesus says to them, "Fear not" (vs. 10). Also, in Matthew he tells the women to tell the disciples he will meet them in Galilee, but here he says he is ascending to the Father (20:17).

Bultmann argues that John is simply having Mary tell the same story which Jesus had already told his followers in 16:28 (Cf. 16:5, 10; 13:33; 14:4, 12, 28), and concludes:

The real Easter faith therefore is that which believes this; it consists in understanding the offence of the cross; it is not faith in a palpable demonstration of the Risen Lord within the mundane sphere.⁹²

Bultmann surprisingly says that the οὐ πω (γὰρ) of verse 17 refers to Mary rather than Jesus, and he is indicating to her that ". . . she cannot enter into fellowship with him until she has recognized him as Lord who is with the Father, and so removed from earthly conditions."⁹³ He then concludes that if this is a correct interpretation, then the passage contains a ". . . peculiar critique of the Easter stories generally."⁹⁴ It seems more likely, however, that Bultmann's interpretation here is guided by a strong desire to have John repudiate all of the appearances of Jesus as unnecessary additions to the story of the cross. Whatever the meaning of οὐ πω, the context is clear that it is in reference to Jesus and not to Mary. Jesus forbids her to touch him because of something which he has not yet accomplished.⁹⁵

Perhaps it is best to summarize briefly Bultmann's under-

⁹²Ibid., p. 688. ⁹³Ibid., p. 687. ⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵More will be said on this difficult passage in Chapter VII.

standing of John before moving on to the next section. Basically Bultmann is saying that the Resurrection narratives are an unnecessary addition to John's Gospel because the exaltation and glorification of Jesus in John is on the Cross, not in the Resurrection. John's reason for setting forth the appearance stories is for the purpose of repudiating them as is seen not only in the appearance to Thomas, but also in the appearance to Mary. Bultmann, however, does not show how Easter faith was born apart from the Resurrection appearances. It is true that the Cross is a sign of triumph in John (12:32, 33), but John shows quite clearly that the road to triumph was understood only after the resurrection of Jesus. The disciples had forsaken Jesus and were crushed by the event of the Cross, and only after the Resurrection did they see the Cross as a sign of triumph. If the triumph was inherently present and visible in the Cross, then it would have made no sense to include such a list of appearances only to repudiate them.

Perhaps it would be best at this point to leave Bultmann's interpretation of John's Gospel and look at the Resurrection narratives as a whole, first looking at the empty-tomb stories and then the appearance stories to see if he has interpreted them correctly.

III. AN ANALYSIS OF THE EASTER STORIES

Bultmann has divided the Easter stories into two categories: those setting forth the empty tomb and those giving the stories of the appearances. Although there are Resurrection narratives which combine both (Matthew 28:1-10 and John 20:1, 11-18), he believes it is possible to view them separately.⁹⁶ In the following paragraphs

⁹⁶Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, op. cit.

these two primary traditions in the Easter narratives will be discussed using Bultmann's analysis as a guide.⁹⁷

Stories of the Empty Tomb

References to the empty tomb in the Gospels are found in Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-10 (11-15), Luke 24:1-11, and John 20:1, 11-18. Bultmann says that the story of the guard at the tomb in Matthew 28:11-15 is a late formulation which goes with 27:62-66 (HST, p. 287). He adds to this that since John's reference to the empty tomb is a late addition to that Gospel⁹⁸ and, further, since Matthew and Luke develop their stories from Mark, the material then reduces itself to the one empty-tomb story in Mark 16:1-8 (Ibid.). Bultmann reduces all of the empty-tomb stories basically to the one found in Mark 16:1-8 which he calls a late apologetic legend added to the tradition to prove the reality of the Resurrection. He also believes--and probably correctly--that the story of the empty tomb was added at a later time in the development of the Easter tradition to the story about the appearances of Jesus in Galilee (Ibid., pp. 287-90).

In regard to the above comments, it should be noted first of all that it is quite clear that Matthew and Luke made use of Mark's empty-tomb story; but it does not necessarily follow from this that any variations in their reports are expansions of Mark. Both Matthew and Luke had other sources at hand from which they could draw

p. 287.

⁹⁷Once again, since many of the references to Bultmann will be based on his The History of the Synoptic Tradition, these references will be indicated within the text using only "HST" and the appropriate page numbers within parentheses.

⁹⁸This is seen in the bringing of two traditions together in 20:1-18.

(besides Q, perhaps M and L or variations of these), and it is by no means certain that these other sources were either later than Mark or inferior to him. Also, it is a possibility that since the Gospels all seem to go in different directions after the Passion narratives, the empty-tomb tradition cannot be so easily assumed to have developed from Mark. Although there is a revelation or appearance by the angel/s given to the women/woman at the empty tomb in all four Gospels, further similarities are almost non-existent. Secondly, it is an assumption of Bultmann's that John's empty-tomb tradition is a late legendary formation. This is not supported by his assertion that Jesus was exalted on the cross leaving John with no need of a Resurrection.⁹⁹ Thirdly, in the Gospels it is not the empty tomb which convinces the followers of Jesus of his Resurrection, it only poses a question. It is the angelus interpres who explains (in the Synoptics) the meaning of the empty tomb (Mark 16:6). Even in John (20:2-10), the empty tomb does not in itself initiate faith, and for the "other disciple" it was remarkably the grave clothes (vs. 8).¹⁰⁰

Raymond Brown makes an interesting observation that there is more uniformity in the empty-tomb narratives than there is in the Resurrection narratives; yet critics continue to assign the empty-tomb tradition to a later stratum of the Gospel tradition.¹⁰¹ The reason for this, he believes, is in part due to the fact that there is no empty tomb mentioned in the more primitive traditions in the Acts or in Paul and in part due to the angelic appearances in these passages which may reflect popular storytelling.¹⁰²

⁹⁹See preceding pp. 129-ff.

¹⁰⁰See preceding discussion, p. 137.

¹⁰¹Brown, op. cit., p. 975. ¹⁰²Ibid.

Bultmann believes that the empty-tomb story existed separately from the stories of the appearances but that presently it is not possible to know which of the two traditions is earlier (HST, p. 287). He thinks that the end of Mark's Gospel (16:1-8) may have been a device to help explain the addition of the empty tomb to the Easter tradition (*Ibid.*, p. 285). He also believes that the whole point of the empty-tomb stories is to prove the resurrection of Jesus, and as such they are secondary stories filled with legend (*Ibid.*, p. 290). For him, it is a strong possibility that, since the Gospels all seem to go in different directions after the Passion narratives, the empty-tomb tradition cannot be so easily assumed to have developed from Mark. Even though there is a revelation or appearance given to the women/woman at the empty tomb in all four Gospels, further similarities are almost non-existent.

Along with this, Bultmann believes that the role of the angels in the empty-tomb story points to the legendary origin of this tradition (*Ibid.*). He notes that except for their interpretative or revelatory role in the tomb tradition, the angels have no significance at all. Bultmann is probably correct in rejecting the story about the angels at the empty tomb, but it does not follow from this that the tomb story itself is a complete fabrication. Quite possibly, the presence of the angels at the tomb was intended by the early Church only to indicate the significance of the tomb.¹⁰³ It may also be asked whether the appearance and message of the angels at the tomb may be excluded from an earlier tomb story due in part to the many differences in the angelic message and also to the differences in the number of the angels and their location. Basically, the lack of con-

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 877.

sistency in the kerygmatic messages of the angels (in John there is no message at all) is one of the chief reasons for rejecting the angelic part of the story. Explaining this problem, E. L. Bode writes:

How can the angel have spoken in the kerygmatic language of the primitive church according to Mark, with the authority of God as his own messenger to announce the predicted resurrection according to Matthew, with themes of Lukan theology according to Luke and without any message according to John? The angel can be treated in this way since he is a literary motif according to the accepted biblical manner of presenting a divinely authoritative message.¹⁰⁴

Originally the report of the women (or perhaps just Mary) about the absence of Jesus' body from the tomb was puzzling both to the women and to the disciples to whom they reported their find.¹⁰⁵ This writer suggests that one of the earliest forms of the empty-tomb tradition may be found in John 20:1, ff., in which Mary and perhaps some others with her¹⁰⁶ came to the tomb and found it empty on the first day of the week. Immediately she left and reported this to the disciples and they, or perhaps just Peter,¹⁰⁷ also visited the tomb to verify the report. There is no indication that Peter believed, and

¹⁰⁴Edward Lynn Bode, The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus, Rome, 1970, p. 175.

¹⁰⁵E. L. Bode believes that the disciples had already departed from Jerusalem to Galilee and that the story of the women telling of the empty tomb to the disciples had an apologetic motif intended to corroborate the story of the women by having an official witness (Peter) examine the condition of the tomb. Cf. Bode, op. cit., pp. 171-2. For this writer, however, the evidence that the disciples left Jerusalem before the discovery of the tomb on the first day of the week is unconvincing. Added to this the fact that three of the evangelists state that the women told the disciples of the empty tomb, it would seem then that the disciples also knew of the empty tomb before they left Jerusalem even though this only caused them to wonder with bewilderment until they received the appearance of Jesus in Galilee.

¹⁰⁶See Chapter VI, pp. 256-60.

¹⁰⁷Luke 24:12 seems to indicate this much, but verse 24

in fact the faith of the "other disciple" in verse 8 on careful examination is suspect.¹⁰⁸ The tomb was only acknowledged with perplexity and wonder at this time. Only later after the appearances of Jesus did the empty tomb take on any meaning at all.

While at first the empty tomb was not included in the Easter kerygma, as Bultmann rightly asserts, its existence could still have been acknowledged--indeed, assumed--by those who proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus. In the earliest preaching about the cross and resurrection of Jesus, the empty tomb, which was not in itself a call to faith, played only a minor role. That the tomb was empty was evidently accepted not only by the friends of Christ, but also by his enemies as is seen in the Jewish polemic in Matthew 28.¹⁰⁹ It cannot be denied, however, that by the time of the formation of the Easter narratives the early Church used the story of the empty tomb as a framework for the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus. This preaching, as Ulrich Wilckens puts it, ". . . was stylized in the form of the proclamation of the angel."¹¹⁰ This is seen, of course,

appears to allow for more than Peter at the tomb.

¹⁰⁸The hero of the passage is "the other disciple" who, according to vs. 8, sees and believes. Clearly this passage serves the best interest of "the other disciple;" but if that one (John?) did believe, it is difficult to square that with vs. 9, ". . . for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead." Also, there appears to be no communication between the "other disciple" and the other disciples concerning this new found faith. Added to this, the fact that neither Luke 24:12 nor 24 indicate that anyone believed at this time causes this writer to think that no one in fact believed at this time.

¹⁰⁹Although the story of the guard at the tomb is viewed by many scholars as a late apologetic inserted into the Easter narratives, the story itself at least shows that both the friends and enemies of Christ admitted that the tomb was empty. The only question was how it became that way. This is discussed more in Chapter VI, Section 3.

¹¹⁰Wilckens, op. cit., p. 73.

in the angelic proclamation, "He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6).

This omission of the angels from the tomb tradition can be justified, then, on the basis that their absence from the story makes more sense of the tradition itself. The tomb was found empty on the first day of the week (all four Evangelists agree) by the women (or perhaps just Mary), and this was reported to the disciples, but the significance of the tomb remained ambiguous until the appearances of Jesus in Galilee sometime later.¹¹¹ The preaching of the resurrection of Jesus in Palestine (primarily Jerusalem) could presuppose the empty tomb and make no mention of it, e.g., Acts 2:22-36;¹¹² 4:8-12, etc. Only later does the tomb become an appropriate vehicle for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. Although there may be "conservative alarm" over the suggestion that the angelic appearances at the tomb were manufactured by the early Church to serve as a means of conveying the Easter message, a second look at the function of angels in the Scriptures will help alleviate the difficulty. Raymond Brown has shown that frequently the appearance of an "angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament is simply another way of visibly describing God's speaking with men without any separate appearance of an angel intended.¹¹³ He also adds that the freedom with which the Evangelists handled the angelic appearance at the tomb, e.g., the number of angels, their position at the tomb, and their message, suggests that

¹¹¹The problem of the location of the appearances will be discussed in the next section and also in Chapter VII.

¹¹²Acts 2:31 seems to presuppose that the body of Jesus did not remain in the tomb.

¹¹³Brown, The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, op. cit., p. 122.

they were aware that they were not ". . . dealing with controllable facts, but with imaginative description."¹¹⁴ For these reasons, this writer believes that the angels and their message in the tomb tradition are late additions of the Church to an already existing and authentic story about the empty tomb.

Along with the above, perhaps it should be added that a resurrected Lord without an empty tomb is not in keeping with Jewish expectations of that day.¹¹⁵ The empty tomb not only points to the nature of the resurrection, but it also has a negative value in that the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus to a group of Jews who could easily produce a tomb with a body would be extremely difficult if not impossible. Accepting the full force of this argument, Raymond Brown believes it is still one of the strongest reasons in favor of the empty-tomb tradition. He writes:

How did the preaching that Jesus was victorious over death ever gain credence if his corpse or skeleton lay in a tomb known to all? His enemies would certainly have brought this forward as an objection; yet in all the anti-resurrection argumentation reflected indirectly in the Gospels or in the 2nd-century Christian apologists we never find an affirmation that the body was in the tomb. There are Christian arguments to show that the body was not stolen or confused in a common burial, but the opponents

¹¹⁴Ibid. p. 123.

¹¹⁵While it may be true that there were several differing views on life after death in Palestine in the first century A.D. and that there was no unanimity on one's mode of existence after death (see C. F. Evans, Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, pp. 27, ff.), it is clear that for the majority of Palestinian inhabitants the notion of bodily resurrection from the grave was the predominant one. Cf. W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, London, 1948, pp. 299-301. The primary difference of opinion seems to have been whether or not the body raised was a physical or a spiritual one. (D. S. Russell, Between the Testaments, Philadelphia, 1965, pp. 145, ff.) Although it cannot be argued conclusively that there was no Greek influence which caused this difference, it is a fact that the Hebrew understanding of personality could not ultimately be expressed apart from a bodily existence. Ibid., pp. 157, ff.

seem to accept the basic fact that the body can no longer be found. . . . Moreover, the Christian memory of Joseph of Arimathea, which can only with great difficulty be explained as a fabrication, would be rather pointless unless the tomb he supplied had special significance.¹¹⁶

Adding to this, Edward L. Bode, in his study of the empty-tomb traditions, has given several strong reasons in favor of the antiquity of this story. For one, he believes that the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week in the empty-tomb tradition is a "rough fit" with the "third day" motif (I Cor. 15:4). If this were a late apologetic story inserted into the Easter narratives, it would seem that the editor/s would have been more careful in bringing the time factor more in line with the "third day" tradition. He explains:

One can by Jewish gymnastics in the reckoning of time make the third day after the death and burial of Jesus come out to the first day of the week when the tomb was found empty. But, without the studied attempt to reconcile the two time indications, the matter is not that apparent, or simple, especially if one follows the Matthean tradition that the visit occurred on what we would call Saturday evening. Thus we wonder if the rough fit of the tomb with the third-day motif could also possibly indicate the antiquity of the tomb tradition Such a lack of harmony would point to an independent and ancient source for the tomb tradition.¹¹⁷

He adds to this the fact that the women were used as witnesses to the empty tomb indicates the essential reliability of the tradition. First, if this tomb passage were an invention, he concludes that the inventors would have been careful to make the names of the women agree.¹¹⁸ Again, he suggests that a report by women would have been suspect (cf. Luke 24:11) making such an apologetic fabrication unlikely. Finally, he notes that women were not allowed by the Jews

¹¹⁶Brown, The Gospel According to John, op. cit., p. 976.

¹¹⁷Bode, op. cit., pp. 161-2. ¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 161.

to be witnesses.¹¹⁹ The strength of this argument of course is that if the story were a late fabrication, it would not have been founded upon the testimony of women.

For these reasons, then, the empty-tomb story can be considered a part of the earliest known traditions of the Church which later became a vehicle for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. The empty tomb is secondary, therefore, only in the sense of importance. Easter faith could not have rested on an empty-tomb proclamation even though this writer believes that that faith could not have existed without it either. The appearances of Christ brought cohesion to the tradition and solved the riddle which the tomb itself posed. If an empty tomb could be established historically, this still would not do much for Christian faith in itself. Unless it were interpreted and seen as that which goes along with the resurrection of Christ, i.e., that which shows the nature of the resurrection of Jesus, it is valueless. Approaching this event, however, solely by means of an historical approach to the empty tomb is fruitless. Hugh Anderson is right in his criticism of Ethelbert Stauffer's attempt to prove that the story of the empty tomb is true. He writes:

Even if Stauffer had proven the empty tomb beyond reasonable doubt, the Erlangen historian would then have given us only an empty tomb and not a risen Lord.¹²⁰

Of course, Anderson's criticism is no argument against the empty-tomb tradition, but he is correct in rejecting a misplaced emphasis. Christians believe in Jesus Christ, not an ambiguous empty tomb.

¹¹⁹Ibid. He cites a midrash on Deut. 19:15 from the school of Akiba who lived in the second century. Bode also suggests a possible connection between Christian witnessing and Paul's order that women remain silent in the Church (I Cor. 14:34).

¹²⁰Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, op. cit., p. 60.

Uninterpreted history is unintelligible and not a basis for faith since it is open to a legion of interpretations and mis-interpretations. For this reason, i.e., the ambiguity of the empty tomb, the interpreting angel was introduced by the early Church into this story.

The revelation of God in history, however, is not as unintelligible as an empty tomb. God has not grounded Christian faith on an unintelligible sign, but upon the appearances of Jesus.¹²¹ George Ladd is probably correct when he says that it is wrong to dismiss the empty tomb as a later apologetic story especially since the Gospels do not set forth the empty tomb to prove the Resurrection.¹²² He notes that the empty tomb was only one indication that Jesus' resurrection was a bodily one:

The bodily character of Jesus' resurrection is attested also in other ways. His body made an impression on the disciples' physical senses of touch (Matt. 28:9, John 20:17, 27),¹²³ sight and hearing (John 20:16; Mary probably recognized Jesus by the tone of His voice when He spoke her name).¹²⁴

Bultmann, while trying to prove the secondary and legendary nature of the empty-tomb tradition, further argues his point by contending that Paul knew nothing of the empty-tomb tradition even

¹²¹Christian faith is based on an encounter with the Risen Lord, not with an empty tomb. The resurrection of Jesus is attested to in the New Testament by his appearances to his followers. After having seen the Risen Lord, the disciples could understand the importance of the empty tomb. It was not so much an object of Christian faith as it was a related means of proclaiming that faith and indeed of helping to see the nature of the event of the Resurrection itself. The tomb is not that which proves that Jesus is alive, only a way of understanding his aliveness.

¹²²George Eldon Ladd, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Christian Faith and Modern Theology, ed. by Carl F. H. Henry, New York, 1964, pp. 276-7.

¹²³Of course John 20:27 does not actually say Thomas touched Jesus, but that he could have is probably the point Ladd is making here.

¹²⁴Ladd, op. cit., p. 277.

though, he concedes, the story may already have been in existence when Paul wrote.¹²⁵ This argument, of course, is an argument from the silence of the early tradition passed on in I Corinthians 15:3, ff., where Paul makes no mention of the tomb in his kerygmatic section on the resurrection of Christ. Bultmann rightly deduces from its absence in Paul that the empty tomb was a subordinate theme in the official kerygma, but he is overstating his case when he claims that the empty tomb was of no significance at all for it (HST, p. 290). The tomb was not mentioned in this kerygmatic passage because faith was not built upon an empty tomb but upon the appearances of the Risen Christ. Ultimately, it is also an argument from silence to say that Paul knew of this tradition; but there are several reasons for rejecting the notion that Paul was unaware of it or at least did not assume that the tomb was empty. First of all, Paul did not write a Gospel; he wrote epistles. Why should he be expected to relate a tradition which played no major role in the proclamation when he is only giving a brief summary of it? Paul did not narrate any of the appearances in this passage; he only briefly listed them. What place or purpose would any mention of the empty tomb have had for Paul's argument in this chapter? Paul is setting forth arguments for the nature of the future resurrection. His argument is that since Christ is risen from the dead--and this is attested to by witnesses and already accepted by the Corinthians, how can some say there is no resurrection from the dead (15:12)? The problem here, of course, is not the Corinthians' denial of the resurrection of Christ, but the resurrection in general. Paul conversely argues that if the dead do

¹²⁵Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., I, 45.

not rise, then Christ is not risen. But since Christ is alive as the appearances show--and not an empty tomb, then the dead do rise.

Again, Bultmann should not automatically assume that Paul's silence on the matter of the empty-tomb tradition indicates his ignorance of it especially since Paul had close contact with the Palestinian churches where this tradition supposedly arose.¹²⁶

In Galatians 1:18-2:10, Paul speaks of his having gone up to Jerusalem and having conferred with the leaders in the church there.¹²⁷ Bultmann would have one believe that this tradition could have circulated in the Palestinian Jewish churches which Paul visited and with whom he agreed fully on the matter of the Gospel (Gal. 2:6-10; I Cor. 15:5-9) and yet the story never cross the path of Paul.¹²⁸ Paul nowhere shows that he was at variance with the empty-tomb tra-

¹²⁶Thus far, this writer knows of no one who seriously entertains the notion that the empty-tomb story developed outside of Palestine. The story is at least in harmony with the Jewish understanding of the resurrection from the dead and could best be understood in a Palestinian context.

¹²⁷Although Paul in his letter to the Galatians states that the leaders in Jerusalem "added nothing" to him (2:6), one must be careful to understand the way Paul expressed himself on this occasion. Paul was accused of preaching a watered-down version of the gospel, and his apostolic authority was in question. Consequently, as J. A. Fitzmyer states, "He was at pains, therefore, to emphasize his divine, direct, and undelegated apostolic commission and the heavenly origin of his gospel." Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Pauline Theology, Englewood Cliffs, 1967, p. 11. Fitzmyer very carefully goes on to show Paul's strong dependence upon the apostolic tradition of the early Church in its kerygma, liturgy, hymns, confessional formulas, its theological terminology, and paraenesis. Ibid., pp. 11-3.

¹²⁸Harald Riesenfeld, in an essay emphasizing the weaknesses of the form-critical method, says that Paul's first journey to Jerusalem after three years in Arabia was probably to fulfill a precondition of the fulfillment of his apostolic work. i.e., that Peter should test him on whether he had really made the tradition of the words and deeds of Jesus his own. This tradition, Riesenfeld adds, would have been in the form which the words and deeds of Jesus would have assumed by that time. Cf. Harald Riesenfeld, The Gospel Tradition, Oxford, 1970, pp. 17-8.

dition; and it is mere conjecture to suggest, as Bultmann does, that this tradition is a legendary addition to the Easter Stories. All four Gospels mention the empty tomb.¹²⁹ and certainly these traditions were in existence in oral form at least before they were written down which would probably make them contemporary with Paul. The variations between the four Evangelists point to a certain freedom in their handling of the traditions with which they were acquainted, but their freedom in handling the empty-tomb story was limited to the minor details only. The fact of the empty tomb is firmly rooted in all four Gospels; and this being so, it is hard to believe that Paul was unacquainted with such a strongly attested tradition in the early Church, whether or not it was circulated inside or outside of Palestine.

Thirdly, for the sake of argument, even if it were granted that Paul was unaware of the empty-tomb tradition as it is presented in the Gospels, it does not follow that he would not have presupposed as much. Paul's understanding of the resurrected body as outlined in I Corinthians 15 is one which involves the transformation of the body into something new. It is not that a person does away with the old body and takes on the new, but that the old is incorporated within the new. This view was not unique to Paul but had other adherents in earlier Judaism. First Enoch 108:11, ff., is a very close parallel

¹²⁹It would seem as though the principle of multiple attestation would be a key factor in deciding an early and late tradition. The story of the guard at the tomb (Matt. 28:11-15) appears only one time and in a decidedly late Gospel. Consequently, many scholars believe it to be a late apologetic narrative designed to meet the needs of the developing early Church. However, the empty-tomb tradition itself appears in all four Gospels, and this argues substantially in favor of its authenticity in the earliest Easter traditions. Cf. Harvey K. McArthur, "The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research," Expository Times, 82:119, January, 1971.

to Paul's understanding of the resurrected body, and II Baruch 50:4; 51:2, 16 also gives a clear indication that the physical body is not rejected in the resurrection but is transformed into the new.¹³⁰ If Paul understood the resurrection from the grave as involving a transformed body, he would naturally have assumed the grave to be empty even if he did not know the elaborate tomb traditions of the Gospels. Why should Paul have made reference to an empty tomb in his kerygma if it did not add to the argument he was presenting and if it would go without saying? The best place to substantiate this claim, of course, is in I Corinthians 15. It must be asked at the outset, to whom was Paul writing? The answer is, of course, that he was writing to the Christian Greeks at Corinth. The acceptance of life after death was not a problem to these Corinthians, but that it should manifest itself in a bodily existence was.¹³¹ The whole argument for the resurrection of the dead would be absurd if the Corinthians took no offense at a bodily resurrection.¹³² Paul's argument for a bodily resurrection is set forth in I Corinthians 15:35, ff., where he argues for the continuity of life after death with bodily existence. Paul shows here that the body is buried (or sown) a physical body,

¹³⁰Cf. D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, London, 1971, pp. 366-79 for a more complete discussion of this subject; also his Between the Testaments, op. cit., pp. 157-62.

¹³¹See W. D. Davies' discussion of this passage where he identifies the deniers of the resurrection as Christians who were open to the Hellenistic influences and therefore found difficulty with the Hebrew idea of resurrection. Davies, op. cit., pp. 303-8.

¹³²It is not known for sure how these Christians viewed the resurrection of Jesus himself or how they may have spiritualized the Easter story. Since they did deny the resurrection in general (15:12) and yet accepted the resurrection of Jesus (15:11), one is led to believe that they were able to harmonize the two seemingly contradictory beliefs in their own minds at least.

but it is raised a spiritual body (vs. 44).¹³³ The continuity lies in the fact that it is a body which is both buried and then raised. The only discontinuity has to do with the nature of that body, i.e., whether it is physical or spiritual, mortal or immortal.¹³⁴

Elsewhere in Paul the spiritual body is shown to be a redeemed and transformed body.¹³⁵ This is surely attested to by II Corinthians 5:4 where Paul writes:

For while we are in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.¹³⁶ h/

This writer completely agrees with Karl Barth's assessment of Paul's understanding of the nature of the resurrection of Jesus in I Corinthians 15 when he unequivocally states:

That by resurrection, anything else than bodily resurrection could be understood by Paul or by the doubters is an assumption to be found nowhere throughout the chapter. It goes without

¹³³Willi Marxsen argues that "the body" in Paul is little more than a reference to the personal "I" and that here the only continuity involved in the pre and post-resurrection modes of existence is that of the "I" of personal existence. Cf. Willi Marxsen, The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, trans. by Margaret Kohl, London, 1970, pp. 69-70. His argument, of course, is to show that for Paul a spiritual body does not presuppose an empty grave. Ibid. This view must be rejected because it does an injustice to Paul's understanding of the body and also because it does not consider I Cor. 15 seriously enough in which Paul shows that the continuity of the resurrected existence with a man's earthy existence is not in a fleshly body, but a transformed body. Future corporeal existence did not mean future physical existence for Paul, but neither did it mean a simple identification of the old "I" with a new "I" of personal existence. If Marxsen is correct, it is difficult to see what Paul's conflict with the Corinthians might have been!

¹³⁴Ladd, op. cit., p. 275.

¹³⁵As in Phil. 3:21 and Rom. 8:23.

¹³⁶This is admittedly a very difficult passage, but here Paul shows that the point of the continuity and discontinuity between the Christian's present and his future is one of bodily existence--or the hope for it--after death.

saying that bodily resurrection is meant.¹³⁷

Although I Corinthians 15:35-54 speaks of the Christians' resurrection and not Christ's, the Christian's resurrection is undeniably associated quite closely with that of Christ (Phil. 3:21).¹³⁸ So then, it could be argued, that as Christ was raised, so the Christian will also be raised. Paul says in I Corinthians 15 that the Christian's resurrection will be a transformed (ἀλλαγησόμεθα vs. 51) existence, not the mere resuscitation of a corpse.¹³⁹ It will be a transformed bodily resurrection from the dead.

Before returning to the question of whether Paul knew of the empty-tomb tradition and accepted it, one more passage should be mentioned to indicate Paul's awareness of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. He writes in Romans 8:11:

... and if the Spirit who raised up Jesus from the dead

¹³⁷Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

¹³⁸Wolfhart Pannenberg adds as proof of this fact Romans 6:8 and 8:29. Cf. Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-7. To be fair, it must be added that Bultmann agrees that the destiny of the Christian is wrapped up in the destiny of Christ, but he does not say that this destiny has to do with a future bodily existence. On this point Bultmann believes Paul is confused. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, *op. cit.*, I, 345-7.

¹³⁹Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 18. D. S. Russell has shown that Paul's understanding of the resurrection of believers is in harmony with the development of the idea in the Intertestamental literature. He cites a striking parallel between I Cor. 15 and II Baruch 49-51 in which an account of the transformation of the resurrection body is given. Cf. Russell, *Between the Testaments*, *op. cit.*, p. 160. Cf. also I Enoch 108:11 where the "spiritual" body is a transformed physical body which was buried in the earth and raised up a "glorious body" on the day of resurrection. Although it is not possible to say that this view, i.e., a transformed bodily existence, was the dominant view of life after death in Palestine in the first century A.D., there is at least this indication that Paul believed that the physical body is not dissolved, but incorporated into the resurrected (or spiritual) body; and in this belief he is in agreement with a later development of the understanding of resurrection in the intertestamental period.

dwells in you, he who raised him up¹⁴⁰ shall make alive (give life to) your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you. (My translation.)

Here Paul clearly says that the Christians' future resurrection is like Jesus' resurrection which was a bodily one. How Jesus was raised is seen in the words ζῶοποιήσῃ καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν. The adjunctive use of καί (also) indicates that what happened to Jesus also will happen to believers. It therefore seems clear that Paul was convinced of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. George Ladd believes that this verse illustrates what has already been said of I Corinthians 15:35, ff., namely that the Spirit will animate "our mortal bodies" in the resurrection, i.e., He will someday give them life.¹⁴¹

Now, in light of the above arguments for the bodily resurrection of Christ in Paul's theology, it seems reasonable to believe that Paul was aware of the empty-tomb tradition given in the Gospels --or he could have assumed as much--and that it was not included in the kerygma he summarizes in I Corinthians 15 because it was a subordinate aspect of the kerygma. Paul's belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ, and indeed of all believers, would make this go without saying. Had Paul written a Gospel and included a narrative of the resurrection of Jesus but not of the empty tomb, Bultmann would clearly have a case to argue; but to say that Paul knew nothing

¹⁴⁰Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν at this point has very weak manuscript support and is not to be considered a part of the original passage.

¹⁴¹Ladd, op. cit., p. 276. On this verse see also R. H. Fuller, op. cit., pp. 20-1, who is in basic agreement with this writer's interpretation here. Cf. also Franz Mussner's book on the resurrection of Jesus where he specifically deals with this and other passages which indicate a bodily resurrection in Paul's thought. Franz Mussner, Die Auferstehung Jesu (Biblische Handbibliothek, Band VII), München, 1969, pp. 106-17.

of the empty tomb because it is not mentioned in I Corinthians 15:3, ff., is a very weak argument, especially when compared with other passages where he speaks of a transformed bodily resurrection.¹⁴² Reginald Fuller is correct when he says that the empty-tomb tradition in the New Testament ". . . serves as a presupposition for the kerygma rather than as a part of the kerygma itself."¹⁴³ He also chides Bultmann for not seeing that the empty tomb in the New Testament does not suggest a resuscitation of a corpse but rather an "eschatological transformation."¹⁴⁴

To say that God has raised up Jesus from the dead means, as Fuller explains, ". . . that the total being of Jesus, his concrete psychosomatic being, the whole man, was translated into eschatological existence, and thereby transformed."¹⁴⁵ Fuller is critical of Bultmann at this point because he believes he is inconsistent with his own enterprise of demythologizing. Bultmann, he contends, did not interpret the empty tomb, but he eliminated it. Bultmann's presupposition that the dead do not rise leads him to eliminate this tradition from the kerygma. However, as has been shown, the empty-tomb tradition is not out of harmony with the New Testament kerygma about the resurrection of Jesus, nor can it be proved that it is either a late tradition or one unknown to Paul. Fuller rightly contends that since the empty tomb:

. . . is embedded in a theological outlook that is wholly

¹⁴²Rom. 8:11, 22-25. Albrecht Oepke also contends that I Cor. 6:13-20 proves that Paul had accepted the empty tomb of Jesus as a fact. Albrecht Oepke, "εὑρίπω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, 1964, II, 335-6.

¹⁴³Fuller, op. cit., p. 179. ¹⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 179-80.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 185.

compatible with the earliest proclamation of the resurrection, that of a transformation of the body out of the grave, we were prepared to assign this alleged fact to the very earliest period.¹⁴⁶

He is also correct in saying that faith in the Resurrection for the disciples did not rest on the empty tomb, only that the disciples used it as a "vehicle" for the proclamation of the Resurrection.¹⁴⁷

Perhaps an additional note should be given before closing this section. Although it is quite common to assert the independent origin of the empty-tomb tradition,¹⁴⁸ this writer is not convinced that the disciples were unaware of the empty-tomb story before leaving Jerusalem. There is no proof that the disciples fled Jerusalem at the arrest of Jesus. The tradition in favor of their knowing of the tomb is quite strong, and the objections to it seem to be based upon the assumption that the disciples fled Jerusalem immediately before or shortly after the crucifixion, and only later did they hear of the empty tomb when they came back to Jerusalem.¹⁴⁹ All of the Gospels presuppose that the women told the disciples of the tomb in Jerusalem. Therefore, the disciples probably knew of the tomb though it meant little to them at the time. It only posed questions to them until they received the appearances.

Stories of the Appearances

Bultmann says there are two kinds or types of motifs combined

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 171. ¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Cf. Pannenberg, op. cit., pp. 104-5; Herbert Burhenn, "Pannenberg's Argument for the Historicity of the Resurrection," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 11:370, September, 1972; Bode, op. cit., pp. 168-ff.; Fuller, op. cit., p. 56; Wilckens, loc. cit.; Hans Grass, Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte, Göttingen, 1970, pp. 173-83.

¹⁴⁹Pannenberg, loc. cit.

or found separately in the appearance stories.¹⁵⁰ The first motif has to do with the proving of the Resurrection by the appearances of the Risen Lord.¹⁵¹ He believes, as was noted previously, that John's Resurrection narratives close with a rebuke of all such stories. John's purpose in giving the story of Thomas, he claims, was to discredit the other appearance stories which try to prove the resurrection of Jesus by means of the appearances.¹⁵² The second motif is the missionary charge of the Risen Lord, and it can be seen especially in Matthew 28:16-20 and John 20:19-23. Bultmann says that the first motif fits better the appearance to individuals, and the second motif comes out clearer in stories of the appearances to all of the apostles (HST, pp. 288-9). Although he admits that this is not a rigid pattern, he believes that John 21:15-17, the main exception, presupposes the presence of the other disciples.

Bultmann argues strongly that the second motif is a late product of Hellenistic Christianity because such stories presuppose the universal mission as something authorized by a command of the Risen Christ (*Ibid.*, p. 189). He is quite emphatic that the earliest Church knew nothing of this command either to the whole world or even to the Jews. He bases his argument on Galatians 2:7 which he claims proves his point.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰J. Jeremias has four motifs which he finds in the Resurrection narratives. Cf. Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology, trans. by John Bowden, London, 1971, pp. 302-3.

¹⁵¹This motif he believes is especially dominant in Luke 24:13-35; John 20:1, 11-18, combined with the story of the empty tomb; 20:24-29; 21:1-14. HST, p. 289.

¹⁵²This was already argued against in the previous section, pp. 129-ff.

¹⁵³HST, pp. 288-9. Bultmann mildly rebukes E. Fascher for not having thought of this passage.

Bultmann's assertion, however, is untenable for several reasons. First, Galatians 2:7 does not exclude a Gentile mission in any sense. It only claims that the primary focus of Peter's mission was to the Jews, and it was recognized that Paul's mission was to the Gentiles. As the book of Acts shows, Paul's first preaching, when he went from city to city, was to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles. Romans 1:16 also points to this fact. On the other hand, Acts 10, 11, shows Peter's concern for the salvation of the Gentiles. Although Galatians 2:11, ff., points to Peter's inconsistency in his mission to the Gentiles, Peter's presence in Antioch would not lead one to conclude that Peter was disinterested in the world mission enterprise! This statement, of course, is assuming that Peter was a part of the earliest Christian community! Would this not indicate that at least one Christian Jew who came from Palestine, e.g., Peter, was interested in the evangelism of Gentiles?

Bultmann evidently does not deem relevant the fact that Jesus, early in his ministry, sent out his disciples to preach.¹⁵⁴ Even though this preaching was to Israel alone at that time (Matt. 10:4, 6), missionizing was certainly a part of the ministry and teaching of Jesus.¹⁵⁵ After the resurrection of Jesus, however, the command to

¹⁵⁴Cf. Mk. 6:7-13; Matt. 10:1-11:1; Lk. 10:1-20.

¹⁵⁵Admittedly the message of the disciples was different at this time than the later post-Easter kerygma found in the Acts and the remainder of the New Testament, but the fact of Jesus' interest in the area of evangelism is clearly indicated here. Also, the interest of Jesus in those who were not of the family of Israel, e.g., Matt. 8:5-13; John 4:7-39; Mk. 5:14-20, does not suggest a lack of interest in world mission. Since these various passages were taught in the earliest Palestinian Church, there appears to be no good reason for denying the Church's interest in world mission. At first, perhaps due to the phenomenal initiation of the Church, the Church was more interested in establishing itself; but within a short period of time the necessity of world mission became a dominant theme in the life of that community of believers.

evangelize included the whole world ("all nations," Matt. 28:19; Lk. 24:47). The evangelistic concern, though confined to Palestine at first, was later expanded from the borders of Palestine to the whole world. Bultmann's assertion that the missionary motif aspect of some of the appearance stories grew up on Hellenistic soil seems to miss the fact that Christian faith was born in Palestine and developed from there regardless of how it later expanded. How did the Gospel which started in Jewish Palestine get beyond its borders without some initiative for evangelism? Bultmann answers that even if the mission to preach to Israel were given to the primitive community in the certainty of the Resurrection, ". . . there could hardly have been a story of an appearance in which this charge was expressly given" (HST, loc. cit.). But why not? Bultmann replies:

For this missionary task could not be experienced as something surprising, needing express authorization, but was self-evidently given in the certainty that Jesus was risen from the dead and that as the risen Lord he was the coming Messiah. And this and nothing else must have been the content of the oldest stories of the Easter appearances, just as it was the content of Paul's vision on the Damascus Road (Ibid.).

This line of reasoning, however, does not fit with Bultmann's other statement that the world mission enterprise began on Hellenistic soil (Ibid., p. 289). It appears as though he is arguing on the one hand that the idea of a universal mission grew up on Hellenistic soil, but then argues that the missionary task was a self-evident phenomenon given in the assurance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. If the appearances (or, as Bultmann says, the assurance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead) contained a self-evident motif for evangelism, then how can Bultmann say evangelism originated outside of Palestine since all of the appearances (or self-assurances as he would possibly call them /Ibid.7/) occurred in Palestine? It appears here that Bultmann has used only that part of

Acts which fits into his own understanding of the kerygma and has discarded that material in Acts (or John) which does not harmonize with that understanding. Notice that in Acts 9:4, 5, the Damascus Road "vision" was not without content. In Acts 13:47 Paul speaks of a commission given to him by the Risen Lord; and again in Acts 26:12-18 the content of that appearance is more completely spelled out, especially verses 16-18. Acts 22:10, 15, indicate that the charge of evangelism was "second hand" through Ananias, but once again this does not mean that the charge did not come from the Lord or that the appearance was without content as Bultmann says. So far few scholars seriously accept multiple authorship of the Acts even though the author may well have used multiple sources in his compilation. The speeches in Acts quite possibly had diversified authorship, but it was probably only one author/editor who put the book together. Knowing this, it is unlikely that the author who emphasized the missionary endeavors of Paul in the last half of the book would have allowed the supposed contradictions between chapters 9, 22, and 26 if he indeed felt that there were any implied. No doubt he felt all three passages were in harmony with one another.

So, why does Bultmann cite Acts as proof that the appearance to Paul was a self-evident conviction rather than a missionary command? The heart of Bultmann's contention is that there was no content in any of the appearances. The conviction of the exaltation of Christ came from the cross, not a Resurrection appearance. All such stories are, for Bultmann, secondary and unnecessary to the Gospel story. The content of such stories developed in large part from the needs of the early Christian community and not from the events which they describe (Ibid., pp. 290-1). He believes that these stories are the results of dogmatic and apologetic motifs of the early

Church (Ibid.). This assertion is quite surprising in light of the strong Gospel tradition which supports the view that in the appearances the Risen Lord gave commands to missionary service. Only Mark, whose Gospel is not complete--and Bultmann agrees here, omits a missionary charge; and even there the last editors of the Gospel (16:9-20) felt the need to "fill in" the missing information concerning a missionary charge. The I Corinthians 15 Resurrection narrative in its briefest form also points to evangelism (vv. 1, 2, 11), i.e., the Gospel which Paul received (παρέλαβον) was meant to be preached (εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, vs. 1) also to the Gentiles. All of the commands of evangelism in the New Testament have their roots in the appearances of Jesus which Bultmann calls secondary and legendary and which he claims have been affected by "novelistic motifs" (Ibid., p. 290).¹⁵⁶ Along with this, the stories which Bultmann says were fashioned by the first motif, i.e., that of proving the resurrection of Jesus, are called late apologetic formulations with the exception of the Emmaus story. Concerning all of the appearance stories, he concludes:

. . . the original Easter happenings are almost as good as overlaid by legend; that the basic appearance which we read of in I Cor. 15:5 has its only echoes in the transfiguration, and the dominical saying in Lk. 22:32, apart from Lk. 24:24 and to some degree the special mention of Peter in Mk. 16:7. (Ibid., p.

¹⁵⁶Although it may be argued conversely that since Jesus himself confined himself only to Israel, the Risen Lord had to be appealed to as the authoritative sanction of the Gentile mission; this seems to presuppose with Bultmann that the appearances were without content and little more than self-assurances of the apostles. This conclusion, however, is clearly out of harmony with all of the appearance stories. Even though the messages vary in degree in each of the Evangelists, the assurance of the aliveness of Jesus and the call to evangelism seems quite clear in all of them. If Jesus did in fact rise from the dead and appear to his disciples, it seems only logical that he would ultimately get around to the disciples' mission in the world.

290.)¹⁵⁷

Some thoughts should be expressed here before moving on to Bultmann's understanding of the nature of the appearances. Bultmann has eliminated from his discussion of the Resurrection narratives the possibility that these Easter stories bear any close relation to the reality of the events they describe. He has not tried to interpret them (or to demythologize them), but he has only tried to indicate the fruitless attempts to grapple with such stories. For him the Easter stories are late and unnecessary formulations for an understanding of the Gospel. These narratives--which climax all four Gospels and lie at the heart of most of the proclamations in the New Testament--are products, he says, of the faith of the early Church and were shaped by its community requirements. It appears as though Bultmann's form-critical approach to the Resurrection narratives has indicated to him that the Church created a tradition or situation in the life of Jesus to satisfy its every need. Explaining Bultmann's and other form critics' approach to the origin of the Resurrection narratives, Harald Riesenfeld aptly comments:

They [exponents of form-criticism] held that their method enabled them to explain the very beginnings of the Gospel tradition. To this question, "What was the situation in the life of the earliest Gospel tradition?" their answer was "preaching" or "catechetical instruction" or "controversy." This was because the first missionaries of the new movement that suddenly arose from belief in the resurrection were at once forced to base their preaching on the words of Jesus or on accounts of events in the life of the great Master of Nazareth. This solution presupposes an extraordinary creative capacity in the first Christian generations.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷Bultmann affirms that originally there was a genuine Easter story about Peter (HST, p. 290), but he does not mean by this that Jesus manifested himself to Peter, only that such a story existed quite early in the primitive kerygma.

¹⁵⁸Riesenfeld, op. cit., p. 5.

Riesenfeld is right in asking for the source of such "creative powers" if Bultmann is correct in his assumptions. Bultmann's historical presuppositions have forced him to conclude his understanding of the Gospel where none of the Evangelists or writers of the Epistles were able to stop, i.e., at the Cross.¹⁵⁹ Bultmann's understanding of the Gospel ends with a theology of the Cross which is derived from an unknown disclosure to the disciples of the significance and meaning of the cross of Jesus. There is, for him, no way of knowing how the Cross disclosed its meaning to the disciples, and that would be unimportant anyway for Christian faith.¹⁶⁰ All of the Evangelists say that Jesus was raised from the dead and that he appeared to his disciples. Also, except for Mark, they all indicate that he not only demonstrated to them that he was alive, but that he also gave a missionary command to evangelize. In their act of evangelizing, many were converted and a Church was born (Acts 2). This is the New Testament explanation of the origin of the Church and of the transformed lives of the apostles, but what is Bultmann's explanation of the origin of Christianity? One of the Church's most cherished beliefs, i.e., the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is hardly more than

¹⁵⁹A possible exception to this is the Epistle to the Hebrews which Willi Marxsen claims indicates the exaltation of Jesus from the Cross without the Resurrection. Cf. Marxsen, op. cit., pp. 144-5. Marxsen claims that the passage in 13:20, "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus . . .," while alluding to the Resurrection is not in view in the epistle and it refers to the exaltation of Jesus, not his resurrection. This reasoning seems to omit a careful look at the passage. Clearly the writer to the Hebrews is not rejecting the idea of resurrection from the dead (cf. also 6:2; 11:19, 35), and while the theme of resurrection from the dead plays no major role in this epistle, the author is certainly not opposed to it. In fact, it can be argued that in light of these passages, the resurrection of Jesus or the resurrection in general was presupposed by the author of that epistle.

a legend the New Testament understanding of which was developed out of the Church's Sitz im Leben. He has already ruled out the possibility that those Resurrection traditions had much to do with the events they describe. But why? It is this writer's contention that since these Resurrection narratives describe "unique" and supernatural events of history, Bultmann has had little to do with them because such notions violate both his understanding of history and the hiddenness of God's activity.

But what about the appearances themselves quite apart from the elaborate Easter stories? What gave rise to Easter faith? Eduard Schweizer is right to ask what happened. He says, "That something happened at Easter cannot reasonably be doubted even from this purely historical point of view."¹⁶¹ How can the $\acute{\omega}\phi\theta\eta$ of I Corinthians 15:3-8 be explained? If there were any such appearances/experiences, what were they? As was shown in the preceding chapter, Bultmann says the appearances were subjective experiences of the apostles.¹⁶² Whatever may have happened after Jesus' death is a matter about which the Christian can freely decide, e.g., visions, hallucinations, etc. For Bultmann, the Resurrection traditions are legendary concretizations of the faith of the early Christian community in the Risen Lord, '... the faith that God has exalted the crucified one as Lord.'¹⁶³ The appearances can be reduced to subjective visions by the historian; but according to Bultmann, this historical problem is

¹⁶¹Eduard Schweizer, Jesus, trans. by David E. Green, London, 1968, p. 46.

¹⁶²Cf. Chapter III, Section 1.

¹⁶³Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Jesus Risen as Goethe?" Der Spiegel on the New Testament, ed. by Werner Harenberg, trans. by James Burtness, London, 1970, p. 237.

of no concern or interest to Christian faith in the Resurrection.¹⁶⁴ In another place he says that the occasion of Easter faith or how the act of decision was made by the disciples and how that Easter faith arose in them has been obscured in the traditions and is not of basic importance.¹⁶⁵ He simply contends that the Cross disclosed its meaning to the disciples in a way which cannot be known or duplicated today,¹⁶⁶ and he is unwilling to pursue the question of how this disclosure about the Cross took place. He admits, however, that the Cross does not disclose itself in the same way to the modern Christian as it did to the first disciples.¹⁶⁷ Today this comes by submission to the kerygma, or the preaching, which supplements the Cross and makes its saving efficacy intelligible ". . . by demanding faith and confronting men with the question whether they are willing to understand themselves as men who are crucified and risen with Christ."¹⁶⁸

One of the chief problems with Bultmann's argument at this point is that, in his rush to dissociate himself from any notion of God's supernatural activity in history, he has left open to speculation what really happened. From an historical point of view, this question must still be raised. Is Jesus of Nazareth alive? Thus far no psychological theories (hallucinations, etc.) have satisfactorily answered the facts of Easter, i.e., the transformed lives of the disciples and the establishment of the early Church. Leonhard Goppelt is right when he says, "The conduct of Jesus' disciples after his

¹⁶⁴Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., I, 42.

¹⁶⁵Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit., I, 45.

¹⁶⁶Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," op. cit., I, 38.

¹⁶⁷Ibid. ¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 42.

death is . . . basically without analogy."¹⁶⁹ There is certainly no parallel to be found elsewhere of a group of disciples changing so radically into triumphant servants of a crucified master. Either the men were beside themselves experiencing some form of subjective experiences, lying, mistaken in their belief, or something happened to them which is without historical parallel. The question may be left open for an historian; but for a New Testament theologian, the choice is not so easy. He is well aware of the New Testament kerygma which speaks of the activity of God in Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection, and he cannot allow such an important historical question surrounding this event to "hang in the balance." The New Testament is not silent on the question of what happened to the disciples or to Jesus, and this writer suggests that Bultmann's limited interest in either the Synoptic tradition or in the relationship between the historical Jesus and the kerygma neglects too considerable a part of the New Testament proclamation.

Emil Brunner, contra Bultmann, believes that psychological theories used to explain the changed lives of the apostles do not adequately account for what took place. He very strongly contends that:

. . . the attempts to explain the Resurrection appearances (visions) from the point of view of psychology are not only without the very least historical basis, but they also remain, when they are tested for psychological probability, in the highest degree unsatisfactory. No psychologist or historian has yet been able to represent as in any way, or to any extent, probable how a group of disciples, which had been broken up by a terrible catastrophe, the shameful defeat of their Master, could have come from purely inner reasons to such a faith which was finally condensed into visions.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹Leonhard Goppelt, Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times, trans. by Robert A. Guelich, London, 1970, p. 8.

¹⁷⁰Emil Brunner, The Mediator, trans. by Olive Wyon, Phila-

He adds to this that the tendency of the person who does this kind of evaluation is to ". . . make everything which the witness of the New Testament puts down as the effect of the Resurrection into its cause"171 He rightly concludes that the historian who:

. . . is moved to replace the connection of facts as it is described by the Primitive Church by the opposite point of view can only be moved by general philosophical reasons, and not by historical reasons.¹⁷²

Bultmann's understanding of the Resurrection appearances is clearly in harmony with his view of history in which he not only eliminates any supernatural or miraculous activity of God in history, but also in which he makes all historical (historisch) events relative and ambiguous. In this regard, Bultmann is also consistent with his own view of history and belief in the hidden activity of God when he shows no concern for trying to sort out the difficulties in the Easter traditions. However, whether or not he is consistent with the "meaning" of the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament or with a correct interpretation of the New Testament kerygma is another matter. It is here that historical assumptions have seemingly become Bultmann's master dictating to him his belief about the activity of God in history. It seems clear, to this writer at least, that Bultmann's historical presuppositions have also led him to an inappro-

delphia, 1947, pp. 578-9.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 579. See also Pannenberg, op. cit., pp. 93-8 for arguments against the subjective interpretation.

¹⁷²Ibid. This writer does not accept Brunner's explanation of the Resurrection appearances as "objective" visions, but Brunner does rightly understand the basic message of the New Testament, i.e., that the resurrection of Christ is not the product of the disciples' faith or subjective experiences, but of the activity of God. He rightly concludes that because God raised up Jesus from the dead and because Jesus revealed himself to the disciples, their lives were changed. Resurrection faith came not from within the disciples themselves, but was initiated by the Risen Lord.

priate understanding of the Resurrection narratives and an unwillingness to ask the historical questions of Easter faith, i.e., what happened to initiate such faith. For Bultmann, the Resurrection narratives do not bring to light a better understanding of the resurrection of Jesus, but instead they point to the faith of the early Christian community which produced them. For him a Christian is free, like a non-Christian, to interpret these narratives in any way he likes. The most that Bultmann can say about them is that they are concretizations of the faith of the early Christian communities that God had exalted the crucified Jesus.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Bultmann has not demythologized the Resurrection narratives and as yet he has not carefully worked out what happened to the disciples at the first Easter. He has sought rather to dismiss the whole matter as a secondary and insignificant part of the Gospel. Hallucinations, mass hysteria, etc., are never treated in any detail in his work; and neither has he worked out the problem of what initiated the experiences of the disciples nor why such experiences as they claim to have had diminished after a short period of time. How is it that the disciples came to glory in the Cross? How was the Cross revealed to them as a sign of victory in the midst of their despair and gloom? This writer contends that Bultmann's lack of interest in dealing with such questions has seriously weakened his contributions to the study of Christian faith itself which, of course, leads to a major inconsistency in his whole theological endeavor. How the scandal of the Cross was transformed into a sign of victory and how it was worked into the context of a salvation-

process Bultmann says cannot be clearly seen.¹⁷³ But is not the message of the Evangelists and the other writers of the New Testament quite clear about this matter? It was in the resurrection of Jesus that the scandal of the Cross was surmounted, and the resurrection became one of the chief foundations of the kerygma in the earliest Church (Lk. 24:34; I Thess. 1:9; Rom. 1:3-4, 10:9-10, Gal. 1:1). It is true that if one dismisses these statements as historically impossible, then it is not at all clear what initiated Easter faith or transformed the Cross into a sign of hope. It is at this point that Bultmann's historical hermeneutics seem to have determined the results of his exegesis. Also, one might ask here, if the Easter event is removed from the New Testament kerygma as Bultmann has done, how can that kerygma be meaningful to modern man? How can the Cross be significant for him if one cannot see how it became significant for the earliest Christians? Can this question be so unimportant or irrelevant as Bultmann contends? This question was important enough to the earliest Church to cause it to include the answer in its kerygma. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus radically altered their understanding of his death. The Easter event made possible and demanded a re-evaluation of Jesus himself and his role in the salvation of mankind.¹⁷⁴

The New Testament is not obscure at the point of what happened, and the issue cannot be considered irrelevant for Christian faith. What is most puzzling to this writer is how Bultmann can eliminate so much of the earliest Christian kerygma and still find it

¹⁷³Bultmann, op. cit., I, 46.

¹⁷⁴See Clark, op. cit., pp. 47-66 for further elaboration of this point.

meaningful to modern man let alone call it Christian. His lack of interest in the historical question of what happened to initiate Christian faith must inevitably cause serious doubt about his understanding of the Christian proclamation itself and its place in the development of the early Church.

Perhaps the most important question to raise at this point is the one posed at the beginning of this chapter, i.e., is Bultmann's understanding of the resurrection of Jesus supported by his exegetical endeavors or by his historical presuppositions? The aim of this chapter has been to show that a careful examination of the Resurrection narratives will not support Bultmann's understanding of the resurrection of Jesus. The Resurrection cannot be reduced to some undefined conviction about the significance of the Cross of Christ. The Resurrection was never in itself an interpretation of the Cross but an event which took place subsequent to the death of Jesus on the cross and prior to the sound of victory in the lives of the apostles. It was the resurrection of Jesus which caused the disciples to reinterpret the meaning of the Cross from a sign of defeat to one of victory.

THE HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

In the preceding chapters we have seen that the historical-
theological approach to the resurrection of Jesus is not a new
phenomenon. It is a method of inquiry that has been used by
theologians and historians for centuries. The historical-
theological approach is a method of inquiry that seeks to
understand the resurrection of Jesus in the context of the
history of the world. It is a method of inquiry that seeks to
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PART TWO

A HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

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1. HISTORY AND THE HISTORICAL METHOD

The Meaning and Subject of History

Originally, the word "history" came from the Greek *historia*.

It is not to be thought that the following statements are agreed to
by all contemporary historians. Indeed, most of what will be said
has been argued variously by modern historians. The point here is
that the historical method, as developed in the nineteenth
century, is the one which is used almost universally by his-
torians today even though this method has been seriously criticized at
different points.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS IN HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

In the preceding discussion it was shown that Bultmann's understanding of history has played a major role in the formation of his theology, his understanding of Easter, and his interpretation of the Resurrection narratives. Presently it will be the task of this writer to show the inadequacy of the historical method for evaluating or appropriating the fact and significance of the resurrection of Jesus. This will be done first of all by describing a philosophy of history and the method of its examination which is used by most modern historians today.¹ Following this, the principles and assumptions of the historical method will be applied to the resurrection of Jesus, the purpose of which is to show the limitations of this procedure and the inappropriateness of applying it to the resurrection of Jesus. In the final two sections of this chapter, the writer will set forth an alternate approach to the resurrection of Jesus which will appreciate its uniqueness and show the possibility of confessing faith in a God who acts in history.

I. HISTORY AND THE HISTORICAL METHOD

The Meaning and Subject of History

Originally, the word "history" came from the Greek *ιστορία*

¹This is not to say that the following comments are agreed to by all contemporary historians. Indeed, most of what will be said has been argued variously by modern historians. The point here is that the positivistic approach to history, developed in the nineteenth century, is the one which is used almost uniformly by historians today even though this method has been variously modified at different points.

and ἱστορέω (derived from ἵστωρ, meaning "learned" or "skilled") and meant an inquiry or visit with the purpose of coming to know someone.² Later, "history" came to be an account of knowledge about someone or something. The term is seldom used in this wide sense today. Often the term "history" is used to distinguish between reality and myth or legend.³ In this sense the term "history" refers to that which really happened and could be used to designate not only human events, but also natural phenomena such as volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, etc., whether or not experienced by man.

More recently the terms "history" and "historical" have been used in a more limited way. History, in current usage, deals with man and those things which have affected him in his environment. The term has become inseparable from the past actions of human beings. In most universities today, the history department is found either in the social sciences faculty or in the humanities faculty, both whose primary interest is man. History, therefore, is not to be confused with "nature" which is not the primary interest of historians. Daniel Fuller accepts that nature can be a part of history, but the primary concern of the historian is human behavior. He writes:

Nature (e.g., storms, pestilences, hereditary characteristics) does affect the course of history, but human behavior in reaction to its environment is the mainspring of history. Hence most historical explanations become attempts to account for human behavior.⁴

R. G. Collingwood says that history is a kind of research or

²William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Chicago, 1957, p. 383.

³James Peter, Finding the Historical Jesus, London, 1965, p. 77.

⁴Daniel P. Fuller, Easter Faith and History, London, 1968, p. 24.

inquiry which attempts to find out things done in the past by human beings.⁵ He summarizes current understanding of the meaning and subject of history, together with the task of the historian, as follows:

Historians nowadays think that history should be (a) a science, or an answering of questions; (b) concerned with human actions in the past; (c) pursued by interpretation of evidence; and (d) for the sake of human self-knowledge.⁶

W. H. Walsh (professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh) limits the historian's field even further by saying that the historian is only concerned with the past actions or facts of mankind which are no longer open or available to direct inspection.⁷ Hugh Anderson holds, however, that a survey of the present and the future is also open to the historian's examination. He writes:

Man's insatiable curiosity to know what happened or what happens is the sanction of scientific historical research as it has always been the inspiration of the natural sciences.⁸

Anderson is certainly correct in claiming that the historian is interested in "what happened;" however, not a few historians would disagree on the second assertion, i.e., that the historian is interested in "what happens." It is true that the natural scientist is interested in "what happens;" but, as will be shown later in this chapter, this is one of the distinguishing marks between his trade and that of the historian. The historian is not primarily interested in "what happens" nor in establishing rules which govern the present and the future; he only uses certain philosophical rules and assump-

⁵R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford, 1946, p. 9.

⁶Ibid., pp. 10-1.

⁷W. H. Walsh, An Introduction to Philosophy of History, London, 1967, p. 19.

⁸Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, New York, 1964, p. 59.

tions which will better enable him to understand the past. It is the philosopher or prophet of history who enjoys the vantage point of surveying the entire historical process, and who is, as Gardiner adds:

. . . not only pointing out characteristics of past events unnoticed by the practising historian, but in addition telling us what the future will be like before it actually occurs.⁹

History, therefore, is essentially limited to a study of the reality of the human past; and, since the future is not yet reality and not yet the past, it does not properly lie within the historian's prescribed field of study.¹⁰ Karl Jaspers, agreeing with this, says that historical science is confined to the past.¹¹ He does not believe the historian's work involves a study of any laws which govern either the present or the future. He writes:

All recognizable necessities, whether evident connections of meaning or causal inevitabilities, are particular. The course of history as a whole knows no necessity. "It had to come" is not a scientific sentence.¹²

Jaspers further limits the role of the historian by saying, "As a scientist he has to make no valid present forecasts either."¹³

The American historian, Robert V. Daniels, agrees with the above and says that history ". . . is the past experience of mankind," and, more precisely, that ". . . history is the memory of the past

⁹Patrick Gardiner, The Nature of Historical Explanation, London, 1968, p. ix.

¹⁰It is here that Arnold Toynbee has received his strongest criticism. He begins his ten volume work, A Study of History, endeavoring to be a historian of preceding civilizations; but he gradually lapses into the role of a prophet of what will take place in all subsequent civilizations. Cf. Criticism of Toynbee by Walsh, op. cit., pp. 160-4.

¹¹Karl Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, trans. by E. B. Ashton, London, 1967, p. 186.

¹²Ibid., p. 187. ¹³Ibid.

experience as it has been preserved largely in written records."¹⁴ He goes on to say that since history treats human affairs, it is most logically studied in its chronological dimension.¹⁵ Within the chronological development of history, one can further subdivide history into geographical locations as well as into political, cultural, and other areas of human interest.

The nineteenth-century positivists¹⁶ held that history was nothing more than the ascertaining of facts, sifting through them, and then framing general laws from them. Although in their labors the positivists never fully carried out this definition beyond the ascertaining of facts, this notion of history was a strong influence upon their work and has continued in a slightly varied form in the works of many historians today. The positivists defined historical knowledge as the reality of the past, and this reality is found in facts whose essence is historical or obtained through the historical process.¹⁷

The historian is constantly looking at the past in order to

¹⁴Robert V. Daniels, "History: (1) Methodology," Encyclopedia Americana, New York, 1971, XIV, 226.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁶Collingwood, op. cit., pp. 127-9. Collingwood has defined positivism as a philosophy acting in the service of natural science whose duties included the ascertaining of facts. Facts were ascertained by sensuous perception. Laws were then framed by generalizing from the facts by the inductive method, and from this a positivistic historiography arose. The rules used to ascertain these facts were basically twofold: first, there was an analysis of the sources in question to determine earlier and later elements in the material, thereby enabling the historian to discriminate between more and less trustworthy portions; second, internal criticism was applied to determine how the author's point of view might affect his statement of the facts, thereby enabling the historian to make allowances for the distortions thus produced. Ibid., pp. 126-30.

¹⁷Collingwood, op. cit., pp. 130-ff.

help him understand man's present condition and development. He is looking for that which will better enable modern man to understand himself in his environment and is only interested in those past events which relate to mankind. This is essentially what Friedrich Gogarten has said when he explains the particular interest of history. Appropriately he declares, ". . . man has discovered his power to transform the earth and has understood himself as the substance of history, which constantly refers back to itself."¹⁸ The substance and the subject of history, therefore, is mankind.

Another limitation on the subject of history, which is more difficult to locate in any one author but seems to be everywhere assumed, is that the subject of history is only concerned with those events which happen within the space-time continuum. Events whether real or imagined in the spiritual realm are not proper subjects for the historian. William Wand explains why:

The reason is that history has no tools by which it can deal with such events. In so far as it is scientific, history is a form of measurement. It can estimate the amount of evidence for or against a given event and can sometimes measure the credibility of the evidence. But the evidence is documentary, whether of stone, parchment or paper, including evidence of an archaeological nature; and none of these belongs to the intangible sphere of spirit.¹⁹

Summarizing the above ideas on the meaning and subject of history, it can be said that although there is no final agreement on the exact meaning of history, there is general agreement on the subject of history. Perhaps the least one could say about history is that it is a critical investigation or inquiry into the past actions of man

¹⁸Friedrich Gogarten, Christ the Crisis, London, 1970, p. 158.

¹⁹William Wand, Christianity: A Historical Religion?, London, 1971, p. 23.

or into events in the past which directly relate to man. Whether it is the historian's duty to frame laws about man's nature in light of the facts he has discovered (so the positivists) is a question which will be taken up presently under the discussion of the task of the historian.

The Task of the Historian

Today no historian would deny that a major part of his task is centered around the discovery of facts. It is also true that most historians would covet as a "right" of their trade the task of interpreting those facts. Facts do not always, if ever, speak for themselves; and this is where conceptual and logical thinking is required from the historian. As Patrick Gardiner remarks, historical writing is ". . . not merely an uninterpreted agglomeration of symbols without reference to experience."²⁰ In this sense every historian has the obligation of acting as an interpreter of history. The practising historian attempts through the historical methods of his trade to describe past events, each event being unique for him.²¹ Gardiner holds that a historian must not only describe past events, but he must also assess them in light of present understanding about the laws of nature, such as the uniformity of nature.²² W. H. Walsh also agrees with this saying, "History is not just description; it is description and assessment."²³ A historian must therefore answer questions about the meaning and purpose of the events he is seeking

²⁰Gardiner, op. cit., p. 42.

²¹I.e., Benedetto Croce, the Italian philosopher and historian.

²²Gardiner, op. cit., pp. 70-112.

²³Walsh, op. cit., p. 184.

to describe.

Probably most historians would agree that even apart from their conscious judgments about the facts or events they are describing, written history is continually reflecting current thought and interpretation about past events. It was Croce who, somewhat pessimistic about the scientific nature of history, coined the phrase that "all history is contemporary philosophy."²⁴ Certainly not all historians would be as pessimistic as this. Walsh argues that a historian's value judgments only "slant" history; they do not determine its details.²⁵

It is this philosophizing aspect of the historian's task which Stephen Neill has correctly understood to be the cause of some of the major debates among theologians on the subject of history. He urges upon the historian the limited task of simply obtaining the facts and not their interpretation.²⁶ What Neill is clearly opposed to is a use of certain philosophical assumptions or rules which the historian uses as criteria for interpreting past events.²⁷ Although Neill is somewhat naive in thinking that the historian can divorce himself from an assessment of his evidence, one could agree with him that this is the place where differences and difficulties arise especially as one seeks to interpret the biblical narratives. Indeed, a Christian historian would obviously interpret the Resurrection narratives differently than would, say, an atheist historian. The evidence they

²⁴Benedetto Croce cited by Wand, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁵Walsh, op. cit., p. 180.

²⁶Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament, London, 1966, pp. 280-1.

²⁷Ibid.

examine is the same, but their interpretation and assessment would undoubtedly be different in many respects due to the former historian's openness to God's activity in history and the latter's denial of the existence of God. The main point of disagreement between these two historians is found in their selection of rules or principles of interpretation.²⁸

When a man thinks historically, he has before him certain documents or relics of the past. His business is to discover what the past was which has left these relics behind it. In this sense, the historian's task cannot be viewed apart from his sources, i.e., whether it be pottery, papyrus, or other written or printed documents, etc. The historian investigates the "tracks which men leave behind"²⁹ which fall into two categories: intentional and unintentional. Daniel Fuller, using Marc Bloch's The Historian's Craft, explains that "intentional tracks" are left when a man deliberately records the events which occurred in a certain span of history.³⁰ "Unintentional tracks" are those things which ". . . range all the way from the artifacts left by a cave dweller to correspondence that men have exchanged. They include anything that indicates how men lived in the past."³¹

The historian must first sift through the various sources available to him and choose the best ones on the subject he is seeking to explore. Secondly, he must investigate and evaluate these sources for understanding, plausibility, and consistency.³² This is

²⁸This area will be discussed more fully in the following section.

²⁹Fuller, op. cit., p. 21. ³⁰Ibid. ³¹Ibid.

³²Daniels, op. cit., p. 228.

done in part by a study of any words or terms used which may be particularly important; e.g., in the New Testament words or terms like "Abba," "Son of Man," "Messiah," "Atonement," etc. Determining the historical circumstances in which these relics of the past are found is also very important. This is done by comparing these relics with one another and any other external evidence available on the same topic.³³ By doing this, Robert Daniels says:

The historian is made aware of the inherent defects in most of his sources--not only deliberate bias or deception, but also the errors of memory that cause eyewitnesses to disagree, as well as the incompleteness caused by the loss of sources or the failure to make certain records in the first place.³⁴

Thirdly, there must be a synthesis of the historical data obtained. This is most properly called the interpretive step in which the historian puts in narrative form a reconstruction of how he believes the examined event occurred. Collingwood believes that the historian must at this point rethink for himself the thought of the author of the relics he is examining.³⁵ He makes a point of the fact that historical inquiry not only involves an event, but also the thoughts behind the original author's/historian's composition. For Collingwood, history cannot be separated from the historian's knowing the thoughts and activities of someone else's thinking about the past.³⁶

³³Ibid. ³⁴Ibid. ³⁵Collingwood, op. cit., pp. 282-301.

³⁶Ibid. Van Harvey is not in agreement with Collingwood at this point. He does not believe that it is important to know all the thought processes of an original author and questions strongly whether such a task is even possible. Van Austin Harvey, The Historian and the Believer, London, 1967, pp. 91-5. Harvey has good objections to the heavy reliance upon knowing the thoughts of the authors of documents from the past, but the validity of trying to achieve this goal cannot be easily pushed aside. Quite often the meaning and interpretation of an event can be enhanced by striving to know the thoughts of the original authors of those documents. To be sure, caution is required in this area and the results, if any, are not always accurate. Gardiner's criticism of Collingwood on this question is quite clear. He argues that not all of history is thought

Often the evidence available to the historian is not sufficient for him to make dogmatic assertions about past events, and it is at this point where the historian must make a careful conjecture. It is here that explanations and judgments may be called for that will involve the historian's own personality, moral values, and assumptions.³⁷ Because it is incumbent upon the historian to make his arguments and statements capable of rational assessment, he should exercise great care in the use of his conjectures. If he is truly a careful historian, he will make clear the "framework" or the assumptions from which he is drawing conclusions or making assertions. This "framework" of the historian is the subject of the next section.

The Framework of the Historian

Many critical scholars have exercised great care and skill in sifting the biblical narratives in order to explain the resurrection of Jesus; but, as yet, very few of their discoveries have gained unanimous acceptance among theological scholars. How is it that two or more competent critical investigators can examine the same set of sources and yet interpret them differently? To be sure, a part of the answer to this problem lies in the complex nature of the sources; but, as will be shown, there are other contributing factors which often will determine the results of their research.

Thomas Arnold has described the resurrection of Jesus as the best attested fact in history.³⁸ It may be properly asked if the

out but is often routine, skilled, or impulsive. Also, he adds that Collingwood's view omits the thoughts of groups who have performed actions in the past. Gardiner, op. cit., p. 49.

³⁷Daniels, loc. cit. ³⁸Collingwood, op. cit., p. 135.

resurrection of Jesus is truly an attested historical fact why all historians have not then accepted it as such. Indeed, it may be very difficult to find any modern historians who would make such a claim about this biblical event. Why is it that what one man considers to be an incontestable fact can be judged nonsensical by another equally trained inquirer? Certainly it would be interesting to know why different scholars have accepted what they have about past events. The relationship between the what and the why could shed a great deal of light on the problem of the resurrection of Jesus.

The problem of the Resurrection is somewhat different today than it was in the time of Jesus. The question then--and especially among the Pharisees--was not whether the dead could rise, but whether in fact Jesus of Nazareth had been raised from the dead. The question today is not so much whether Jesus was raised from the dead, but whether anyone has been raised from the dead. On what evidence can a twentieth-century man decide on this question? Willi Marxsen says that a man who thinks historically cannot subject himself to the belief held by men in the past that such an event as the resurrection of Jesus actually took place.³⁹ He holds that a man must reject the miraculous element in the New Testament in accordance with modern concepts of historical judgment which were initiated at the time of the Enlightenment.⁴⁰ He argues:

We simply must (in spite of the unequivocal belief of those narrators and early readers /of the Bible/) raise the question of historicity and then answer this question in accordance with our own historical judgment and knowledge.⁴¹

³⁹Willi Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem," The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, ed. by C. F. D. Moule, trans. by Dorothea M. Barton and R. A. Wilson, London, 1968, p. 16.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 16-7. ⁴¹Ibid., p. 16.

In accordance with Marxsen's "own historical judgment and knowledge," he clearly rejects the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event. Evidently, one must decide about the resurrection of Jesus quite apart from any support which the Bible might set forth in its defence. The big question, then, is not whether Jesus was raised, but can a man--any man--be raised from the dead? Along with Marxsen, Van A. Harvey also believes that one must make a decision about the historical nature of the resurrection of Jesus quite apart from any arguments which the New Testament might bring forth in its support. Van Harvey rejects von Campenhausen's statement that since so much evidence stood in favor of the empty tomb of Jesus and little definite and convincing evidence against it, it was "... therefore probably historical." He argues:

When dealing with an event so initially improbable as the resurrection of a dead man, the two thousand-year-old narratives of which are limited to the community dedicated to propagating the belief and admittedly full of "legendary features, contradictions, absurdities, and discrepancies," how could a critical historian argue that since much can be said for it and no convincing evidence against it, it is probably historical?⁴²

Before one investigates the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament, must he commit himself to a particular interpretation of that event or at least to the idea of the supernatural prior to investigating it? Xavier Léon-Dufour says yes. He believes that one must answer the big question about the possibility of such an event before he can assess the evidence in favor of it. Concerning the resurrection, he writes:

The problem facing the historian is here at its most acute, since it is impossible for him to assess any evidence for the resurrection without first making a personal option about the

⁴²Harvey, op. cit., p. 109.

possibility of a man's rising to life from the grave.⁴³

Dufour also finds it impossible for a man to approach any historical evidence for an event objectively if he has already rejected the possibility of the occurrence of that event.⁴⁴ Obviously the view one takes with respect to the possibility of the resurrection of the dead will greatly influence his view of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. This kind of "prior understanding" is what Patrick Gardiner had in mind when he spoke about the temptation of the historian to ask the "big questions" first, and having answered them, ". . . to deal with the subject along a course set by those answers."⁴⁵

Once again, on what basis shall a man determine whether one can rise from the dead? What evidence can be brought forth which will enable him to decide either way? Why will some men accept the resurrection as a possibility and others reject it? Is there any commonly accepted criterion among historians which will enable them to make a decision? These are questions which are very perplexing to modern historians as well as to critical theologians. The reason for the differing responses to the notion of a resurrection from the dead lies in part with the fact that historians have failed to develop a set of agreed canons of interpretation which all who call themselves historians would accept.⁴⁶ Not all historians agree on the criteria, or rules, for judging one event historical and another unhistorical. That which causes historians to disagree among themselves regarding

⁴³Xavier Léon-Dufour, The Gospels and the Jesus of History, ed. and trans. by John McHugh, London, 1968, p. 254.

⁴⁴Ibid. ⁴⁵Gardiner, op. cit., p. xi.

⁴⁶Walsh, op. cit., p. 21.

the interpretation and/or assessment of past events is also the cause of some of the current debates in modern theology about the resurrection of Jesus. It is the "framework" of the historian which determines how he will decide on a given question. Walsh argues that the work of a historian must be thought in terms of an artist who is in a sense expressing his own personality.⁴⁷ That which he brings with him to his work will significantly affect his conclusions.⁴⁸

Coming back to the resurrection of the dead, the reason why one historian will accept this alleged event as true and the reason why another historian who has examined the same evidences for that event rejects it is because both historians bring something with them to their sources which cannot be found in the evidence itself. The why is found in their own peculiar interests and personalities as well as in their own philosophies about the universe in which they live. Walsh argues quite convincingly that the way a historian tells a story depends not merely on what he has to tell, but also on his own interests and preconceptions.⁴⁹ He holds that there is a subjective element in every historical inquiry which determines what the historian will accept or reject. It is this subjective element which Walsh describes as the limiting factor in any truly scientific-historical investigation of the past.⁵⁰ He goes on to explain this subjective element by saying, "... history is always written from a particular point of view, a phrase which includes the acceptance of a

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁸This discussion naturally leads into the problem of the objective nature of historical inquiry, but a detailed discussion of this subject is not possible here.

⁴⁹Walsh, op. cit., p. 176. ⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 169-87.

certain moral outlook."⁵¹ It is this "moral outlook" which slants the way he assesses the evidence for an alleged event. Walsh's "moral outlook" is the same as that which Paul Tillich describes as the "historic consciousness" of the historian which is ". . . one cause of the endless differences in historical presentations of the same factual material."⁵²

Tillich says it is impossible to sever this "historical consciousness from the historian." "There is no history without factual occurrences, and there is no history without the reception and interpretation of factual occurrences by historical consciousness."⁵³ He also recognizes that all history, whether legend, chronicle, scholarly report, etc., contains history interpreted through one's own philosophical framework.⁵⁴ Tillich says that this interpretation also has many levels:

It includes the selection of facts according to the criterion of importance, the valuation of causal dependences, the image of personal and communal structures, a theory of motivation in individuals, groups, and masses, a social and political philosophy, and underlying all of this, whether admitted or not, an understanding of the history in unity with the meaning of existence in general.⁵⁵

Walsh says that there is no scientific way to justify the moral outlook of one investigator over another, at least, none has been found at present to determine whether one moral judgment is more correct than another.⁵⁶ Even though sources which the historian handles cannot be altered by his assumptions or "moral outlook," his

⁵¹Ibid., p. 182.

⁵²Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Digsweil Place, 1968, III, 321.

⁵³Ibid., p. 322. ⁵⁴Ibid., p. 372.

⁵⁵Ibid. Underscoring mine. ⁵⁶Walsh, op. cit., pp. 182-5.

conclusions about these sources cannot always be verified by a thorough examination of them either. If one historian refuses to accept the "moral outlook" of another, much can be said about him, e.g., that he is unreasonable, irresponsible, etc., but never that he stands opposed to the facts.⁵⁷

History and Science

Whether or not history can be called a science is an age-old question which as yet garners no consensus of opinion among historians. In a very broad sense, history could be called a "science" because, like science, it seeks to discover or find out things. However, when the term "science" is applied to knowledge, there are factors which, according to Walsh, must exist. This knowledge must be:

- (a) . . . methodically arrived at and systematically related;
- (b) consists of, or at least includes, a body of general truths;
- (c) enables us to make successful predictions and so to control the future course of events, in some measure at least; (d) is objective, in the sense that it is such as every unprejudiced observer ought to accept if the evidence were put before him, whatever his personal predilections or private circumstances.⁵⁸

Obviously, some of these statements could not be made about history. For example, it would be difficult to find a British historian who would agree with an American historian on the American Revolutionary War whether he were discussing its causes, the net effects of the war, or even the particular battles involved in that conflict. The same could be said about the French Revolution if it were interpreted by German and French historians.

If the above rules are to be adhered to, then, as Gardiner

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 182. ⁵⁸Ibid., p. 37.

natural scientist is primarily concerned with that which happens and continually does so under repeated observations of controlled experiments. A person who uses past events to illustrate certain laws by which he can thereby predict future events or actions of human behavior is not properly a historian but something else more difficult to describe.⁶² The historian's interest is more appropriately directed to particular events rather than universal laws.

Much more could be said on this point about the scientific nature of history; however, due to the limitations of this chapter--its primary purpose is to be a summary of historical thinking--this discussion must be brought to a close. Whether or not history is a "science" and whether it can be thus called scientific or not is a debate which cannot be settled here; however, certain characteristics of history must be noted. In the natural sciences laws are demonstrable through the process of controlled observation; but in history, laws are assumed and are not illustrated by the results of inquiry. The "laws" or "principles," however, often do determine the interpretation given to the phenomena examined by the inquirer. Objectivity is always the aim of any conscientious historian, but honesty must also compel him to make known his presuppositions and assumptions when they affect in any way his reconstruction of the past. If the historian is to distinguish his work from mere propaganda, he must strive for objectivity and impartiality in his work. He must also strive to be honest enough to indicate when his own preconceptions and interests have not only guided some of his pursuits, but also swayed him in his conclusions. This relationship

⁶²It is here that Gardiner as well as Walsh choose to label Spengler and Toynbee as "prophets" of the future rather than as historians of the past. Ibid., p. 44.

concludes, history is not a science.⁵⁹ There are no experimental and inductive processes in history by which its conclusions can be tested. Also, history cannot be demonstrated by controlled observation. Gardiner points to four primary arguments used by some historians to show that there is a distinction between history and the general understanding of scientific knowledge. They are:

- A. Historical events are past events and hence cannot be known in the manner in which present events are known.
- B. Historical events are unique and unclassifiable.
- C. History describes the actions, statements, and thoughts of human beings, not the behavior of "dead matter" with which science is concerned.
- D. Historical events have an irreducible richness and complexity.⁶⁰

The above distinctions between history and science have been criticized and debated by historians, but they do help to bring out the features of historical writing. A natural scientist observes phenomena in order to discover certain laws which can be detected about the behavior of all such phenomena in the same given circumstances. A historian, though not able to divorce himself from thinking about certain events within the framework of laws, e.g., those which govern nature, is not out to discover laws, but is concerned with describing past events and indicating not only how and why they happened, but also their relevance for man's own self-understanding. Although he is not free to disregard general laws from his mind when reconstructing the past, he also does not set out to establish these or any other laws in the process of his work.⁶¹ A historian is primarily interested only in what happened in the past and its relevance for modern man, not what generally happens. On the other hand, a

⁵⁹Gardiner, op. cit., pp. 28-9. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 34.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 43-6.

between objectivity and the historian's "moral outlook" or "framework" in the scientific study of history is properly seen by Karl Jaspers to be one of the limiting factors in modern historical science. He explains:

The presentation of historic realities--events, conditions, periods, personalities--is always a work of art on a scientific basis. If successful, it is scientifically based in all its parts; but on the whole, in the choice of the theme and in the selection and arrangement of facts, it will arise only from motives which transcend science, though they must accept its limitations.⁶³

Principles and Assumptions of Modern Historiography

Ethelbert Stauffer, in his book Jesus and His Story, sought to minimize the subjective element found in historical research and, with regard to the biblical testimony about Jesus, sought to let the ". . . facts speak for themselves."⁶⁴ In Stauffer's attempt to argue for the resurrection of Jesus, he systematically sets out to prove the emptiness of the tomb in which Jesus was buried. However, as Hugh Anderson clearly indicates, "Even if Stauffer had proven the empty tomb beyond reasonable doubt, the Erlangen historian would then have given us only an empty tomb and not a risen Lord."⁶⁵ What Stauffer failed to see was that facts do not speak for themselves; they must be interpreted. If the facts are to be meaningful, the historian must interpret them. Although the nineteenth-century positivists had originally intended to assess and interpret the facts they discovered, they never fully carried out their intentions. Their barrenness was due chiefly to their subsequent limitations of

⁶³Jaspers, op. cit., p. 187.

⁶⁴Ethelbert Stauffer cited by Anderson, loc. cit.

⁶⁵Anderson, op. cit., p. 60.

their task to the mere ascertaining of the "facts."

How the historian interprets his facts will in large measure be determined by the historical methodology and assumptions which he adopts. In the preceding sections this writer tried to make it clear that there are certain philosophical preconceptions and assumptions which guide the historian in his work, and that this "framework" from which he derives his conclusions can help to explain the differences among historians who are dealing with the same subject and handling the same sources. In this section the writer will try to make clear what those assumptions are and the methodology used by leading historians today. It is hoped that this section will not only point out those assumptions used by most historians in their task of historical explanation, but also those which create difficulties for theology.

The Principle of Autonomy

The revolution of thought brought about by the Enlightenment was one between authority and autonomy. Immanuel Kant saw the Enlightenment as an autonomy from authority. It was man's release from all authority that would deprive him of his freedom to think without direction from another.⁶⁶ Reason reigned supreme after the overthrow of authority. Prior to the Enlightenment, the mediation between past events and the present was accomplished chiefly by means of testimony. The historian knew the past simply by accepting or rejecting an authority who was a witness to past events. This form of knowledge has been called by Collingwood a "scissors and paste" type of history.⁶⁷ He argued that in so far as a historian accepts the testimony of an authority and treats it as historical truth, he

⁶⁶Harvey, op. cit., p. 39. ⁶⁷Collingwood, op. cit., p. 282.

"obviously forfeits the name of historian; but we have no other name by which to call him."⁶⁸ Prior to the Enlightenment, the function of the historian was essentially a job of compiling and synthesizing the testimony of his so-called authorities or eyewitnesses. The historian was primarily an editor and a harmonizer. Collingwood concluded that this kind of work was useful, but not history because ". . . there is no criticism, no interpretation, no reliving of past experience in one's own mind."⁶⁹ Reflecting this autonomy from authority, Harvey explains one of the primary tasks of a modern historian:

While it is true that the interpreter of a text must try to see the issues through the eyes of its author, he cannot be so loyal that he fails to see where that author himself failed to do justice to his subject matter.⁷⁰

Harvey also believes that the use of this principle is a part of the task of the critical theologian in relation to his exegesis. He further writes:

One must, to be sure, listen to and wrestle with Paul, but that also means to see where Paul himself sometimes failed to communicate properly his vision. One must, in other words, determine the degree to which the subject matter really has achieved adequate expression in the words and statements of the author. One cannot assume that even Paul spoke only in the spirit of Christ, for other spirits also come to expression through him.⁷¹

Although a historian cannot function properly apart from his sources, his sources never dictate to him the conclusions he must accept. In this sense, autonomy is an accepted principle used by most modern historians.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 256. ⁶⁹Ibid., p. 204.

⁷⁰Harvey, op. cit., p. 40.

⁷¹Ibid.

A Closed Causal Nexus

One of the main presuppositions of history today is that history must be viewed as events occurring within a closed continuum of cause and effect. This is the prevailing view of history which has come out of the Enlightenment era and was described and refined by the nineteenth-century positivists. This is also the predominant view of history held by modern historians. History in view of this assumption is, as Braaten explains, an unbroken chain of immanent interconnections of cause and effect.⁷² Each event emerges out of and must be understood in relation to the historical context in which it appears. This closed causal nexus is what Ernst Troeltsch referred to as the principle of correlation. MacQuarrie explains its meaning thus:

The point of the principle of correlation is, however, that although there may be distinctive events, and even highly distinctive events, all events are of the same order, and all are explicable in terms of what is immanent in history itself. Thus there can be no divine irruptions or interventions in history.⁷³

Macquarrie says the effects this principle of "correlation" has upon the "Act of God" is that he reveals himself, but "... his activity is immanent and continuous. It is not the special or sporadic intervention of a transcendent deity."⁷⁴ Although an event may qualify and transform the future course of history in significant ways, it never appears within the historical process as "an inexplicable bolt from the blue."⁷⁵ Gordon Kaufman has noted that the task

⁷²Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 81.

⁷³John Macquarrie, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought, London, 1971, p. 143.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Gordon D. Kaufman, "On the Meaning of 'Act of God,'" Har-

of the modern historian is:

. . . to explain and interpret the movement of man's history entirely by reference to the interaction of human wills, the development of human institutions and traditions, and the effects of natural events and processes, i.e., exclusively in intramundane terms.⁷⁶

Clearly this view of history has been devastating to the traditional theological notions about the activity of God in history. Because of this naturalistic mold in which the historian has chosen to work, Kaufman concludes that the inevitable result is a denial of the existence of God, and hence, "God is dead."⁷⁷ The natural outcome of this notion about history, in methodology at least, excludes awareness of a God who acts in history, i.e., in time and space events, and with it man's responsibility to him. This is because the secular historian presupposes the interrelation and interconnection of all events in an unbroken line of immanent causes and ". . . seeks the driving force of a historical process in mankind itself."⁷⁸ Friedrich Gogarten says that this assumption is based on the premise that man is responsible for the world and what takes place in it, while he completely ignores responsibility to God.⁷⁹ This exclusion, he is careful to explain, is not in principle, but because of "purely methodological reasons."⁸⁰

This assumption, therefore, concludes that all historical events are "natural" events and have "natural" explanations. There is an uninterrupted series of events which are in continuity with one another, and cannot be explained apart from one another. Within the historical circumstances surrounding an event, there must be

vard Theological Review, 61:187, 1968.

⁷⁶Ibid. ⁷⁷Ibid., p. 179. ⁷⁸Gogarten, op. cit., pp. 158-9.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 158. ⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 158-9.

something within those circumstances which would naturally give rise to the resulting event. This could be illustrated by saying that a war had been won because the general on the winning side had better trained men, the best military equipment available, a larger army of men, or that the weather and terrain were in his favor (e.g., as in the case of Napoleon vs. Wellington), etc. The historian could never deduce, however, that a general won a battle because God was on his side. A Christian may say that God was at Dunkirk, but a historian would be forced to say, "So were the British Spitfires!"

Again, since all events are of the same order, no particular event can be called final and therefore it is not absolute or unique. The net results of the application of this principle to Christianity, as Macquarrie correctly concludes, is that Christianity becomes a relative religion. He writes:

Christianity belongs within the sphere of religious and human history as a whole, and no absolute claim can be made for it. The life and work of Jesus Christ himself may be a very distinctive event, but it cannot be absolute or final or of a different order from other historical events.⁸¹

Patrick Gardiner recognizes that the historian is primarily concerned with describing past events and indicating why and how they took place, but he adds that the historian may not treat them as unique in the sense that they occur suddenly from the blue.⁸² They occur in the course of history and are connected events. A revolution does not just occur, but it must be seen as the result of many historical causes which gave rise to it. All historical explanation is based

⁸¹Macquarrie, loc. cit. It should be noted that Macquarrie was giving the consequences of Ernst Troeltsch's historical method as it is applied to Christianity; however, Macquarrie's conclusions on this issue are not much different from those of Troeltsch.

⁸²Gardiner, loc. cit.

on the idea of continuity, that is, the circumstances surrounding an event must in some way give rise to it. Also, those circumstances are considered to be "natural" causes and not something which comes "from above." All events are interconnected in the sense that one gives rise to another.

The Principle of Analogy

Along with the principle of a closed causal nexus, modern historiography is based on the principle of analogy. This principle simply means that historical knowledge relies upon what is known in order to find out what is unknown. It assumes that history is repetitive and constant. That which is absolutely unique does not occur in history. Braaten expresses the meaning of this principle by saying, ". . . distant events of the past are knowable only because the historian finds some connection between them and present-day occurrences with which he is familiar,"⁸³ John Macquarrie explains this principle as follows:

We must go on the assumption that the events of the past are analogous to the events which we ourselves experience in the present. A report of events which are analogous to present events must be deemed to have more inherent probability than a report of events for which we can find no analogies in our own experience.⁸⁴

It may be assumed that the Battle of Waterloo was a single occurrence in history and, in that sense, unique. However, there have been other battles in history in which great generals have fought, and, in this sense, Waterloo has analogy. There was only one Napoleon who ruled France and brought the rest of Europe to her knees through his military conquests. On the other hand, there have been other rulers in history who have conquered vast segments of territory; and, in

⁸³Braaten, op. cit., p. 44. ⁸⁴Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 142.

this sense, Napoleon is not without analogy.

In favor of this principle, it may be argued that a historian has no other means to enable him to interpret history than his own knowledge and sensory perception of the world in which he lives. What he knows about the repetition of nature, its constancy, and the general laws within which nature operates helps him to understand the scope of history. Therefore, since events tend to repeat themselves and since knowledge can only proceed from the known to the unknown, an event cannot be considered historical if it is without analogy to other events in history. Patrick Gardiner says that the historian's primary interest is in establishing past events in their unique setting:

History is about what happened on particular occasions. It is not about what usually happens or what always happens under certain circumstances; for this we go to science.⁸⁵

However, he also maintains that the historian cannot divorce himself from certain laws which govern his work. He admits that the historian is only concerned with describing past events and indicating how and why they occurred when they did, but also that ". . . the historian, for all his attention to the individual and the unique, is not free to disregard general laws in his work of reconstruction."⁸⁶ It is the principle of analogy which he is here describing as a "general laws."

Carl Braaten does not approve of the use of this principle because, if it is a valid principle, then history cannot reflect anything new--only what it already knows; and consequently it has little to say.⁸⁷ The main objection to Braaten's contention is an

⁸⁵Gardiner, op. cit., p. 40. ⁸⁶Ibid., p. 45.

⁸⁷Braaten, op. cit., pp. 44-6.

old one, i.e., what is absolutely unique is absolutely unknowable. Knowledge always proceeds from the known to the unknown. However, it may be argued that the absolutely unique is knowable if it has been revealed. The Christian argues that God has uniquely revealed himself through his Son, Jesus Christ. Revelation appears to be the best answer Christians can muster in defense of the uniqueness of Jesus and of his resurrection from the dead. The historian qua historian cannot, therefore, treat uniqueness in the same manner as would the Christian. Such a step by a historian would violate the procedures he uses to describe and interpret past events.

The Principle of Probability

It is difficult to find this principle treated extensively or even discussed by itself, although it can be inferred from different writers. This principle is what Gardiner calls "commonsense explanation."⁸⁸ When one uses his "commonsense," he falls back upon his own experience and does not employ high degrees of precision in his assertions.⁸⁹ When one encounters the phrase, "the cow jumped over the moon," he does not ask about the kind of cow involved, nor the circumstances relating to the action; he simply calls the notion absurd because he has neither seen nor heard of such a thing. No doubt he has observed a cow, and based upon his knowledge of a cow he could safely say that such a phenomenon is impossible. There are many things which, according to his own experience and knowledge, are highly improbable, i.e., that a man could run a three-minute mile, that axe heads float on the water, or that dead people rise from the grave. On the other hand, referring to a battle again, it is prob-

⁸⁸Gardiner, op. cit., pp. 5-23. ⁸⁹Ibid., p. 6.

able that at least one great general, Napoleon for example, will lose a battle sometime. His experience tells him that greatness does not always insure success. The criterion of the principle of probability is the sensory experience, perception, and reflection of the historian who is investigating the past. His understanding of the "facts," at least in his own experience, determines the probability of certain alleged events, i.e., that a man cannot run a mile in three minutes, etc.

II. HISTORICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The results of the above notions of history are doubtlessly clear in their implications for theology. To begin with, Christianity is deprived of its miraculous assertions. All of its proclamations about unique, absolute or supernatural events must be discarded. If these assumptions are correct, Christianity can no longer be considered absolute or final but is sufficient for some people. Christianity has therefore been reduced to a phenomenon of history and is to be understood naturally within the religious development of man. There are some examples of conclusions drawn by the historian when the above critical assumptions are applied to Christianity. When they are assumed as a proper guide for interpreting the resurrection of Jesus, the conclusions are also very similar.

First, the subject of the resurrection of Jesus is God and not man. It was God, according to the New Testament, who raised up Jesus from the dead;⁹⁰ man is only a passive recipient of the blessings

⁹⁰Although most references to the resurrection of Jesus refer to God as the author of Jesus' resurrection, there are a few passages in the New Testament which allow for Jesus' self-resurrection. Cf. Mk. 16:6; Matt. 28:6-7; Lk. 24:6, 34; but especially John 10:17-18.

derived from this event. If the historian is only interested in the subject and past actions of man, then in a technical sense he has ruled out the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event. Based on current notions of the subject of history, Jürgen Moltmann rightly concludes:

If, as has frequently been pointed out, it is true that the experiences of history on the basis of which the concepts of the historical have been constructed have nowadays an anthropocentric character, that "history" is here man's history and man is the real subject of history in the sense of its metaphysical hypokeimenon, then it is plain that on this presupposition the assertion of the raising of Jesus by God is a "historically" impossible and therefore a "historically" meaningless statement.⁹¹

Secondly, since the New Testament writers view God as the author of this supernatural--or at least out of the ordinary--event, then its view of history is not one which views events as occurring only within a closed continuum of cause and effect. The resurrection of Jesus, according to the New Testament, was accomplished by one who is outside and beyond the boundaries and limitations of natural causation. To the New Testament writers, history is an open continuum wherein YAHWEH who, though separate from nature, is free and powerful enough to perform redemptive deeds within it, and to make his will known to mankind in "ways which are not our ways."

Thirdly, there are no analogies to the resurrection of Jesus which will enable the historian to interpret properly such an event. The historian proceeds from the known to the unknown in an inductive style of investigation. Therefore, what is absolutely unique must in turn be absolutely unknowable. This, of course, is true unless one

The earliest references to the resurrection of Jesus, however, have Jesus in a passive condition, and God is the one who raises him up. Cf. I Cor. 15:4; Acts 2:23-24; 4:10; 5:30-31, etc.

⁹¹Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope, trans. by James W. Leitch, London, 1969, p. 174.

accepts, as do the New Testament writers, the concept of revelation, i.e., God has revealed his uniqueness in the person of his Son. The biblical writers accept another form of knowledge which is not experienced through the inductive method but through the special revelation of God, sometimes by his redemptive deeds and sometimes by direct verbal communication such as the Law given at Mt. Sinai. It must be admitted, however, that the historian has no objective criterion by which he can ascertain or examine such revelations.

Fourthly, there are no natural causes in the circumstances surrounding the resurrection of Jesus which could give rise to that event. Jesus was arrested, beaten, crucified and buried. His disciples forsook him and fled and were filled with despair and gloom. In these circumstances there is nothing in the experience of the historian or in any known natural laws which would compel him to conclude that a resurrection must be forthcoming. On the contrary, what the historian knows through experience and demonstrable natural laws would force him to conclude that the life of Jesus ended at the cross.

Fifthly, based on the principle of probability, Jesus must remain in the tomb. It is simply not probable under any known circumstances that a dead man should rise from the grave. Some of the more conservative scholars⁹² argue that Jesus was not simply "just another man," but that he was in fact the Son of God, unique in every way; and it is not probable that death should contain such a person. Against this line of reasoning is the complete inability of the historian to determine the uniqueness of Jesus through the historical method any more than he can establish the resurrection of Jesus from

⁹²T. F. Torrance, Wilbur Smith, and others.

the grave. There are no categories of thought available to the historian whereby he can go behind the faith statements of the early New Testament writers and demonstrate that Jesus was in fact "Lord," "Christ," "Son of Man," or "Son of God." It should also be noted that the New Testament writers work from the event to establish or recognize the uniqueness of the person of Jesus and not the other way around.⁹³

It has become quite clear that the above described historical method presents serious difficulties to the biblical view of the resurrection of Jesus. If history is a closed continuum, then history is also closed to the kind of "Divine deeds" found so frequently in the Bible, whether it be the floating of an axe head, walking on water, or the resurrection of the dead. Moltmann is right when he concludes:

In face of the positivistic and mechanistic definition of the nature of history as a self-contained system of cause and effect, the assertion of a raising of Jesus by God appears as a myth concerning a supernatural incursion which is contradicted by all our experience of the world.⁹⁴

Viewed through the modern historical method, supernatural or miraculous events appear absurd. The problem now for theologians is to decide whether the historical method has reached its objective limits or whether it has "inbuilt" limitations which prevent it from properly assessing the resurrection of Jesus. Are there real events of the past which are not discernible through the modern historical method of investigation?

From the above it is obvious that any modern theologian who wishes to confess Jesus as the risen Lord is therefore bound to

⁹³Cf. Acts 2:32-36; Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:5-11.

⁹⁴Moltmann, op. cit., p. 177.

grapple with the problems of the relationship between history and faith. Whether it is possible or even desireable for a modern Christian to have a faith like Paul or the Twelve Apostles in the risen Lord Jesus will depend, to a great extent, on his view of history and its relation to faith.

All would agree that the biblical writers did not have scientific minds guided by the rules of modern historiography. They did not purpose to write historical or biographical documents in the technical sense of those terms, but rather they sought to write confessions of faith which were meant to call men to faith in their risen Lord. They were indeed interested in the biography of their Lord and other historical information available to them, but only as these things aided them in their evangelistic calling of men to faith in Christ. They were certain, in their own minds at least, that the resurrection of Jesus and the other events they sought to describe had actually happened. They also confessed that the earthly Jesus could not be understood apart from the Easter faith which they proclaimed. Ernst Käsemann, who also recognizes this fact, writes:

Primitive Christianity is obviously of the opinion that the earthly Jesus cannot be understood otherwise than from the far side of Easter, that is, in his majesty as Lord of the community and that, conversely, the event of Easter cannot be adequately comprehended if it is looked at apart from the earthly Jesus.⁹⁵

Whatever "historical" statements may be said about the Gospel narratives, one must conclude that the writers of these narratives believed that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead and was seen of men. Willi Marxsen concludes that the resurrection of Jesus ". . . is the presupposition for the fact that Jesus later became the

⁹⁵Ernst Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes, trans. by W. J. Montague, London, 1968, p. 25.

object of preaching."⁹⁶

From here the question naturally arises whether the modern historian who accepts the historical assumptions discussed in this chapter can agree with the declaration of Easter faith, i.e., that Jesus is risen from the dead. George Ladd does not believe that this is possible. As he puts it:

The critical historian, as historian, cannot talk about God and his acts in the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Parousia; for although such events occur within the history of our world, they have to do not merely with the history of men, but with God in history; and for the historian as historian, the subject matter of history . . . is man. Therefore the historical-critical method has self-imposed limitations which render it incompetent to interpret redemptive history.⁹⁷

It seems fair at this point to say that if a Christian wishes to affirm faith in the resurrected Jesus, he must do so in opposition to the conclusions of modern historical science; or he must find some way to confess his faith in the risen Lord which will be in harmony with this method. If the currently accepted historical method is not a valid method for establishing all the actual past, then its weaknesses must be demonstrated and its limitations made clear. The theologian may wish to classify the Resurrection as "unhistorical" since it does not fit in with the popular notion of that which is "historical;" but, as Moltmann argues, he must ". . . look around for other ways for modern, historically determined man to approach and appropriate the reality of the resurrection."⁹⁸

⁹⁶Willi Marxsen, Anfangsprobleme der Christologie, Kassel, 1960, p. 51.

⁹⁷George Eldon Ladd, "The Problem of History in Contemporary New Testament Interpretation," Studia Evangelica, ed. by F. L. Cross, Berlin, 1968, V, 99.

⁹⁸Moltmann, loc. cit.

III. HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

For the historian who is closed to the idea of the unique or the miraculous in history, there appears to be no way of establishing the supernatural character of the resurrection of Jesus. It is then necessary for him to account for the origins of Christianity in terms of natural explanation. However, if the historian cannot satisfactorily account for the origins of Christian faith through a critical-historical approach, is it then possible to arrive at some other equally valid approach which would account for Christian origins? This approach, which will be discussed presently, asserts that there are limitations imposed upon the historical method. It also contends that the historical method is incapable of examining all factual events of history because there are significant self-imposed limitations implied in that method.

Bultmann appears to be of the opinion that science alone can settle matters of historical fact. In this sense, if the historian is incapable of solving a matter of historical fact, then it would follow that Christian faith cannot do so either. For Bultmann, there are no categorical limitations imposed upon the historian's craft in relation to past events of history, and therefore the resurrection of Jesus is not a fact of history since it cannot be discovered through this method.⁹⁹

On the other hand, if one seeks to continue his confession of Jesus as the risen Lord, there must of necessity be some meaningful way to proclaim confidence in God's activity in the Easter Event. Is it possible that an event of history can be discovered or encoun-

⁹⁹See the discussion in Chapter II for a more complete discussion of Bultmann's understanding of history and myth.

tered apart from the critical-historical method? Can a so-called "historical-theological" approach recover that which the critical-historical approach discussed above cannot? Is there something in the nature of a "theological method" which can recover unique or supernatural events of the past? Christian faith has traditionally confessed the unique activity of God in history, and yet it must be conceded that there are no "scientific" ways of proving that such unique activity ever occurred. But if this is so, why should such events have anything to do with the Christian proclamation? Bultmann does not believe that they do and is perfectly willing to hide the Christian proclamation behind an ambiguous cross in history.¹⁰⁰ However, this writer believes that the Christian proclamation is so completely wrapped up with an assurance of God's unique activity in Jesus which culminates in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus that the Church cannot release itself from its roots in a unique event in history. Indeed, one's credulity is stretched beyond all limits to suppose that Christian faith is based solely upon an ambiguous cross. That would be little more than proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus on the grounds of an ambiguous empty tomb. In what way could the tomb do anything more for Christian faith than pose a question--in fact, the wrong question? Equally so, the cross alone could not in itself lead to Christian faith. Bultmann is right to say that the cross posed a question to the followers of Jesus; but that it could in itself "disclose to them its meaning"¹⁰¹ stretches the credibility of one's faith even more than believing, as the dis-

the basis of a revelation from God through the preaching of the

¹⁰⁰Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 38.

¹⁰¹Ibid. especially Acts 2-5.

ciples did, that God had raised Jesus from the dead. It was the Resurrection which allowed a new understanding of the cross to come to the disciples. A simple examination of the earliest Christian preaching in the Acts will show that the early Church's Christology and understanding of salvation is based upon their belief in the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁰²

Christian faith does not hinge upon the historical-critical method's ability to examine the past nor upon any ambiguous event of the past, e.g., the empty tomb, but in the certainty that God has acted uniquely and decisively in Jesus of Nazareth, not only in his death, but also in his resurrection from the dead. The fact of this confession is not rationally perceived or mediated through any historical methods, but through the certainty of Christian faith as it calls upon the believer to submit to the Christ who reveals himself in the preaching of the kerygma (e.g., Rom. 10:9-10; I Cor. 15:3-ff.). This may be called a "theological perception" rather than a logical deduction from history. If the historical method could prove this unique activity of God, there would indeed be no faith at all (II Cor. 5:7). Yet to deny the resurrection of Jesus is to deny the very heart of the Christian proclamation itself (I Cor. 15:17). In other words, it is not possible to prove the activity of God in Christ through any wisdom of this world (I Cor. 1:18-29), but the denial of that unique activity denies the validity of the Christian faith altogether. The Christian message is not received through logic, reason, or through historical research, but it is believed on the basis of a revelation from God through the preaching of the kerygma (I Cor. 15:11). This believing is an obedient submission to

¹⁰²See especially Acts 2-5.

the call of God which comes through the preaching of the kerygma. Christian faith believes that God speaks through the proclamation of the Christ (Rom. 10:14-17). Although faith is not primarily an assent to a series of facts, Christian faith cannot thereby deny the truthfulness of the kerygma to which it submits. The aliveness of the risen Christ is demonstrated by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer who submits himself to the call of God. The Christian can therefore proclaim that Christ is alive not only because the early disciples said so, but also because he has encountered him in the preaching. The truthfulness of the message is known through a submission to the call of God which comes through the proclamation of that message and is verified by His Spirit to the man of faith (Acts 5:32). The Christian's confession of God is a confession of trust and confidence in one who ". . . gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17b).

The historical method has never been capable of discovering God's activity in history (and in this Bultmann is right). The accuracy of this statement can be seen in the impotent Life-of-Jesus research of the liberals of the last century. Jesus was never called "Lord" because of his ethical teachings, and it is almost universally admitted that the inchoate band of disciples after Jesus' crucifixion had no basis in their contact with him to continue together in his name. What it was that initiated (or reinitiated) their faith in him after his death has never been on public display for the critical historian because what happened was unique and revelatory and therefore beyond the scope of the historian's inquiry. The unique, the supernatural, and the revelatory activity of God are beyond "objective" inquiry because the historian is limited to examining only the "natural" and "normal" events of life. He can only involve himself

with that part of the past with which he is already acquainted through his own experience and which has analogy to other known events of the past.

Although for different reasons, this writer agrees with Lloyd Geering who argues that the resurrection of Jesus should be ". . . removed from the class of events which are properly called historical and which are open to historical investigation."¹⁰³ It is not the kind of event which is capable of "historical" scrutiny. The "creeds" of Christian faith may be open to the unique activity of God in history, but the "creeds" of the historian preclude such a confession. Those who contend that the resurrection of Jesus is a historical event capable of historical inquiry¹⁰⁴ appear to be unaware of the background and development of historian's craft. The resurrection of Jesus is best left out of the realm of the "historical" and allowed to be confessed as a unique and revelatory event brought about by the activity of God. The reality of the resurrection of Jesus is not known through historical inquiry or logical deduction, but through an encounter with the living Christ.

There is indeed a subjective element found in the study of the past, not just on the part of the historian, but also on the part of the Christian. Christianity has maintained consistently that God is known only through an obedience of faith. Only through submission to the Christ who comes through the preaching of the Word concerning him can the truthfulness of the message concerning him be finally demonstrated with assurance. The aliveness of Christ is seen today

¹⁰³Lloyd Geering, Resurrection: A Symbol of Hope, London, 1971, p. 216.

¹⁰⁴Merrill C. Tenney, The Reality of the Resurrection, Chicago, 1972.

in this participation in and submission to the message about him. In one of the earliest confessions of the Church, it can be seen that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and his Lordship were confessed and believed in the "heart," not demonstrated through reason (Rom. 10:8-10). That subjective element is trust in God and not in the human resources of wisdom (I Cor. 1:18-29). It is God's Spirit which testifies to the Christian the validity of the proclamation (Acts 5:32) and of his place in God's kingdom (Rom. 8:14-16).

The above may appear to be an unwillingness on this writer's part to submit the resurrection of Jesus to historical analysis; however, this writer is simply saying that the final judgment about the Resurrection is reserved for faith and not history. No apology is made for this statement, for truly there appear to be no rational, scientific or historical reasons for confessing the Lordship of Jesus Christ. How can it possibly be that one who has suffered a humiliating death on a cross can also be the exalted Lord of the Church? Only after God's disclosure of his unique activity in raising Jesus from the dead did Christian faith become a possibility. Even Bultmann admits that a story about a crucified Jesus would not lead anyone to a confession of his Lordship. For him it was only after a self disclosure about the meaning of the cross came to the disciples that Christian faith became a possibility.¹⁰⁵ He does not believe that the significance of the cross can be read off from the actual event in history, but is understood by an acceptance of the word of preaching as the word of God.¹⁰⁶ Faith for Bultmann is not an arbitrary decision, but a response to the risen Lord who comes through the preaching of the cross. He correctly states, "In the word of

¹⁰⁵Bultmann, loc. cit. ¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 38, 41, ff.

preaching and there alone we meet the risen Lord. 'So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ' (Rom. 10:17)."¹⁰⁷

This writer is in complete agreement with Bultmann's denial of the historian's ability to discover the meaning of the cross or the act of God through some objective critical examination of the past. Bultmann is correct in saying that only in submission to the preaching of the Word of God can one confess Christ as Lord. This writer's primary objection to Bultmann, however, has to do with the place where he says Christian faith was initiated, i.e., at the cross. The Word of God which was proclaimed by the earliest Christians shows clearly that the significance of Jesus for faith was seen primarily in his resurrection from the dead. The message of early Christianity is that Jesus is to be proclaimed the exalted Lord because he has been raised from the dead (Rom. 1:3-4; Acts 2:32, 33, 36). Although Bultmann rightly sees the need for faith and trust in the word of preaching before an acknowledgment of the exalted Lord can be made, he tries to separate the Church's confession of the resurrection of Jesus from the message which is preached. He wants the results of the resurrection without the resurrection. The proclamation of the gospel, however, is also a proclamation of the activity of God in time and space in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Is it therefore possible to confess as fact an event in history which is not capable of proof? Yes indeed! And this possibility arises only through a submission to the call of God which comes through the preaching of Christ. Is it possible to deny a part of that activity--i.e., the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 43.

--and still claim that the resultant faith is one with that of the early Church? In other words, to what extent is New Testament faith bound to the unique events which it proclaims? Bultmann has tried to extricate the Christian message from its supernatural and miraculous trappings created by a mythological world view and yet maintain that he has not lost the true New Testament understanding of the Christian message. By demythologizing the Christian message, he has sought to clarify what Christian faith is and also to make its acceptance a possibility for modern man who dismisses the supernatural stories of the past. He does not believe that Christian faith is bound to the mythical world view of the New Testament times which accepted such things as spirits, angels, resurrections from the dead, etc.; and he believes that he is at liberty to dismiss such things as being products of a primitive world view. His purpose is to isolate the real "stumbling block" of Christian faith and to recover the existential self-understanding which is expressed in the mythical trappings of the New Testament.

Bultmann would not want to be accused of "dismissing" or eliminating the myth of the New Testament; rather, he claims to have reinterpreted the actual meaning of the myth. He has tried to interpret the myth of the New Testament existentially, but in so doing he has failed to convey the real message of Easter. Easter was never understood as something which happened primarily to the disciples, but to Jesus. Although Easter faith does have existential significance for the man faith, it was primarily an event in the life of Jesus. Easter faith became a possibility only because of what God has done in the death and resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15:3-5, 14). Christian faith therefore cannot deny that which the historian cannot prove. Faith is inextricably bound up with a unique event of

the past which the Christian may readily admit is not capable of historical verification though it is attested to through the act of faith. This does not make the faith or the events which it confesses less real, only that they are not perceived in an "objective" manner.

Christian faith cannot defend itself against the claim that it is a subjective religion except by saying that faith is a response to a genuine call from God which comes through the preaching of His activity in history, i.e., the cross and resurrection of Jesus. It is objective in the sense that this faith is not produced from one's own longings, etc., but is initiated by Christ himself who comes to the obedient hearer of the Christian message. The Christian realizes that his new life is a gift from God and is not due to any self-motivated psychological feelings, though there are no "objective" ways to prove otherwise. God's speaking to the believer cannot be detected through a critical-historical investigation, but only through the obedience of faith to the call of God. In this sense, God has always been capable of "proof," but this is a proof known only through the "eye of faith." It is proof known by means of a "theological" and not a historical inquiry.

It must be added again that Christian faith is vitally interested in history. The cross and resurrection of Christ stand at the heart of its proclamation. The kind of history which is set forth in the Old Testament and the New Testament, however, is an inseparable mixture of natural and supernatural events. The historian's focus is only upon the former, but the theologian must decide on the latter as well. Note for example the statement, "Jesus Christ died for our sins." Whatever else is meant by this, there is clearly a double reality in question. If Jesus never died, the final half of the statement is meaningless. On the other hand,

if the former were demonstrated, it would not follow that he died in a benevolent manner for someone else. There are two assertions here inseparably bound together in the New Testament kerygma. The first is a historical statement which lends itself to historical examination. The second is a theological assertion which lies beyond the historian's craft but is open to Christian experience by faith. Both statements, however, are true for Christian faith and are accounted for in the act of submission to Christ. The reality of Christ's forgiveness is experienced in the life of the believer. This is not to say that it did not happen if it does not become a part of one's experience, but only to say that the reality of the assertion is known not through historical inquiry, but through submission to the forgiveness of Christ. This may, in a sense, be called a "historical-theological" method of inquiry since it necessarily involves a historical event, i.e., the death of Christ, but also a theological assertion with regard to the activity of God in this event the significance of which may be experienced by the one who submits himself to God.

In the resurrection of Jesus there is a similar combination of history and theology though, to be sure, of a far more questionable nature. In Romans 4:25 Paul speaks of Jesus "Our Lord" "who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." In the latter case Jesus was raised from the dead "for our justification." The complete significance of what Paul means by "justification" will not be explored here, but basically he is saying that in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (a historical assertion) the man of faith (the context shows this) is made right in the sight of God and brought into a proper relationship with Him (4:22-25). In both instances, i.e., in Jesus' death and in his

resurrection, God is actively doing something for mankind; and what He is doing is inseparably linked to His activity in Jesus. If the historical aspects of these assertions are deleted, then the theological activity is also in serious question.

Although it can be argued fairly that the death of Jesus is a significantly different kind of asserted event than his resurrection, it can be seen in both instances that God is involved directly in the time and space continuum of history bringing about His purposes for us in Jesus.

Bultmann will allow in the first instance that in the death of Jesus God was active on our behalf securing for us a new existential self-understanding. Here in the death of Jesus is that strange combination of historical and theological activity, the former which is open for historical inquiry, but the latter only to Christian experience which comes by obedience to the call of God. At this point Bultmann does not separate the act of God from history, he only affirms that such activity is hidden except to the eye of faith. For Bultmann, the historian cannot penetrate or discover the activity of God. That activity is only through faith and submission to God. Although the historian can with a great degree of probability demonstrate the death of Jesus on the cross, he by no means is aware at the same time of the activity of God in this event.

Bultmann is convinced that all alleged events of the past are open to historical inquiry and verification. What the historian cannot verify (at least in principle) did not happen. Also, according to Bultmann, God acts within such historical events, but always in a hidden manner, not disrupting the natural causal-nexus of the universe. Although the historian can verify to some degree the "historical" (historisch) aspects of those events, God's activity

remains hidden within them.

The resurrection of Jesus, however, is an event which violates the natural causal nexus of the universe and removes the "hidden" activity of God. Indeed, the New Testament equates God's activity directly with an historical event and, for the disciples, places faith on the level of sight, not only removing the element of decision, but also the hidden nature of God's activity.¹⁰⁸ For Bultmann this is intolerable because, by objectifying the activity of God in history, faith has been destroyed.

There are two big assumptions at work in Bultmann's line of reasoning. The first is that God does not act directly in the causal nexus of history and the second is that the historian can prove all alleged events of the past. By eliminating the possibility of God's direct intervention into the space-time continuum, unique events are thereby dismissed and all events can be described in terms of analogy, probability--based on natural law, and one's own experience. In the case of the second assumption, however, the historian can "prove" all "historical" events only if they are of the same order. He is not equipped to handle the unique or the miraculous.

¹⁰⁸Whatever may be said of the "objective" nature of the resurrection, it is not clear that an impartial observer could have witnessed the appearances of Jesus. Apart from the Apostle Paul, none of the witnesses to the appearances could have claimed "objectivity" since they had been followers of Jesus before his death. James, the brother of Jesus, also probably was not a convert before the appearance of Christ to him (I Cor. 15:7), though this is not certain. The appearance which Paul received, if the Acts account is to be trusted, cannot be regarded as that kind of event which the impartial observer could witness. The resurrection of Jesus was considerably more than a mere resuscitation; it was a resurrection to a new mode of existence which may not have been objectively identifiable. The resurrection of Jesus was revealed to the disciples through the Easter appearances. It is not clear how much the hidden activity of God was altered in the resurrection of Jesus though, according to Bultmann's understanding of God's activity, it is clear that it was altered.

If the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is affirmed, the principle of hiddenness of God's activity must be set aside or altered and, it would seem, along with it Bultmann's basic understanding of faith--at least for those who experienced the appearances of Jesus and believed because they saw (Jn. 20:8, 29). However, faith is not necessarily altered because Christian faith is basically a response to the activity of God. It does not follow that God only speaks interpretively of events which can be explained on a natural cause and effect basis. The Scriptures are clear that God not only speaks, He also acts. He not only confronts man in his historical existence through preaching, but the biblical message also contends that He can interrupt the natural course of world events as in the Exodus or the Resurrection. His activity is not limited, and man is called upon to confess the activity of God in whatever form it is presented. The historian can in principle limit his field of inquiry to events of a natural order, but the theologian would do well not to place upon God the limitations presupposed upon history by the historian.

There are some, perhaps, who would object to the unique role the apostolic witness played in the Easter traditions and demand some sort of a "democracy of access" to the risen Christ. Should not all post-resurrection generations be given the opportunity to see and believe as well as experience Christ's presence in the way claimed by the disciples?

John carefully discriminates between those who saw and believed (Thomas) and those who have not seen and yet believed (20: 29). The disciples occupied the role of "official witnesses"¹⁰⁹ so that other

¹⁰⁹Gerald O'Collins, The Easter Jesus, London, 1973, p. 80.

that others might also believe (Jn. 20:29-31; Acts 1:3; 13:30-32). These witnesses played a unique role in the Church's history and can in one sense be called the founding fathers of the Church. The apostles clearly enjoyed a prominence in the early Church (Acts 1-12), and their testimony may properly be called a part of the early kerygma (I Cor. 15:5-8).

Bultmann rightly sees the unique role played by the first disciples and separates their encounter with Christ from that experience presently enjoyed by the Church.¹¹⁰ He writes, "... the first disciples' faith in the resurrection is itself part and parcel of the eschatological event which is the article of faith."¹¹¹

Just because the resurrection of Jesus is seen in the New Testament as a revealed act of God in history, it does not mean that Christian faith is destroyed if it is remembered that the disciples, because of their place in history, played a unique role in the Easter event itself as eyewitnesses. One must still exercise faith in their witness, and that witness cannot be demonstrated or substantiated through modern historical methods. It is only in the act of "justification" as described above (Rom. 4:22-25) that the Christian finds a correlate for that witness of the unique activity of God in history.

Although the preceding discussion seems to imply that Easter faith is completely immune from historical judgments, this is only true in so far as the historian has removed unique events from his field of investigation. A claim that the resurrection of Jesus is immune from historical inquiry would be saying in so many words that the event belonged only to a special religious sphere and not to his-

¹¹⁰Bultmann, op. cit., p. 38. ¹¹¹Ibid., p. 42.

tory. There are many aspects of Christ's resurrection and the events surrounding it which are open for a critical investigation--in fact demand such investigation, e.g., the discovery of the empty tomb, whether the women visited the tomb, the nature of the appearances, whether in fact Jesus was crucified, etc. O'Collins is right in saying that even if the historian is reluctant to take the resurrection as an object for his direct study, ". . . there exists an historical 'fringe' to the resurrection which calls for the historian's attention"112 O'Collins contends that while the historian may not be able to prove the resurrection of Jesus, he could in principle prove ". . . that certain presuppositions (for example, that Jesus lived and died) or attendant claims (for example, that his grave was discovered to be empty) were false."113 "In brief," he continues, "if the historian cannot verify the resurrection, he could in principle disprove it."114

Christian faith can neither be reduced to historical knowledge nor exist independent of it either. Christian faith therefore confesses confidence in the unique activity of God in history even though it does not offer verifiable historical evidence of this activity. It offers instead the testimony of eyewitnesses who "saw and believed" and who reported in their own way what it was that happened as well as the encounter which the believer may also have with the risen Christ. Although the historian is able to examine the testimony of the eyewitnesses and even point out various discrepancies and/or consistencies in such testimony, it is not possible for him to go behind their belief in the Resurrection event and prove that God was at work in what they describe; he must either submit to

112 O'Collins, op. cit., p. 60. 113 Ibid., p. 61. 114 Ibid.

it or reject it. Were the disciples deceived or mistaken? Did they lie? Is there a psychological explanation for their conduct and message shortly following the death of Jesus? How can the origin of Christianity be explained? This writer contends that the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the only adequate Christian explanation for the rise of Easter faith and that the historian qua historian cannot answer the question.

IV. FURTHER REMARKS ON THE HISTORICAL METHOD

Each of the aspects or procedures of the historical-critical method described in this chapter is in need of a great deal of expansion, and the validity of each certainly remains open for discussion.¹¹⁵ However, the writer believes that the assumptions, principles, and procedures discussed above provide a platform for understanding the modern historical approach to the ancient past. One very strong objection to the current historical method comes from Stephen Neill who claims that history has no "rules." He states unambiguously that ". . . the historian, if he is a true historian, knows that there are no rules."¹¹⁶ Again he claims that the historian does not commit himself to any view of the definition of the "natural" or "supernatural," "philosophical terms with which he has no concern."¹¹⁷ He denies that the words "possible" and "impossible" are part of a historian's vocabulary, and his historical approach to the Bible is comparable to the old "scissors and paste" approach denounced by the scholars of the Enlightenment era.¹¹⁸ This writer

¹¹⁵Braaten, op. cit., pp. 42-ff.

¹¹⁶Neill, op. cit., p. 280. ¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 281.

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 279-86.

certainly is in sympathy with Neill who wants to make history open to God's activity, but he cannot justify Neill's seeming ambition to remove from historiography much of its critical development over the past two hundred years. In the twentieth century a theologian, or a historian for that matter, who makes an assertion regarding the historicity of an event must be prepared to consider the "rules" of assessment and the presuppositions from which a modern historian operates. To fail to do this necessary step only contributes to the confusion and ambiguity already present in this area of modern theology.

After the above historical method has been applied to an event, the results of the investigation will determine whether the event is "historical" or "unhistorical" in the critical scientific sense of these terms. In saying the latter, a scholar could be making two very different and very distinct judgments about the reported event. He could be saying that the event did not happen at all, that is, that the event did in no way occur in the past. Or, on the other hand, the scholar could be saying that the event goes beyond the self-imposed limitations of the historical method; and the critical historian, as historian, is not qualified to make a final decision about the matter for it lies beyond his field of investigation. Because the event does not "qualify" under these stated "rules of procedure" and assumptions to be called "historical," it does not necessarily follow that the event did not happen. The event could possibly be an actual fact occurring within the time and space of man's existence, that is, this event could be an objective event occurring within history, yet, above or beyond historical investigation. This position is more closely associated with the Heilsgeschichte theologians who wish to call such an event a "supra-

historical" event in the sense that it is outside of the boundaries of historical investigation and therefore remains a matter of faith and not of historical knowledge.¹¹⁹

Is it possible for Christian faith to have such confidence in an "unhistorical" history? Presently it appears that there are only three alternative positions: (1) either to admit that the supernatural does not exist in history, or (2) to redefine history in order to "make room" for a God who acts in history, or (3) to assert that the proper discipline for the study of God and his activity is not history, but theology. This last alternative is closer to the position which this writer holds, but it has a "danger point" if not correctly understood of removing Christianity from the realm of history, an act which would undercut the heart of Christian Faith.

With regard to the resurrection of Jesus, can it be said that this is an actual event in history even though it lacks "historical" verification or analogy?¹²⁰ Can the believer who places his faith in Jesus Christ submit him to historical research and still find justification for his faith? Can the historian tell the believer what he is to believe about Jesus? Paul van Buren seems to say, "Yes!" He says that Christian faith is based on history and is centered around a man who actually lived, died and was buried; and because of this fact, he concludes that the believer is at the mercy of the historian.¹²¹ This risk, he argues, is the price of centering Christian

¹¹⁹George Eldon Ladd, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Christian Faith and Modern Theology, ed. by Carl F. H. Henry, New York, 1964, p. 279.

¹²⁰So asks Jürgen Moltmann, "Resurrection as Hope," Harvard Theological Review, 61:136, 1968.

¹²¹Paul M. van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, Middlesex, 1963, p. 131.

faith in history.¹²² Van Buren adds, however, that the historian can make important binding judgments about Christianity. When viewing the resurrection of Jesus, van Buren allows his empirical attitudes to determine that the resurrection of Jesus as set forth in the New Testament was not an event of the past.¹²³ To put it another way, since experience and observation show that dead people do not rise from the grave, then neither did Jesus. Günther Bornkamm does not share van Buren's optimism about the historical method and its ability to dictate to the Christian the content of his faith. He holds that history is a servant to faith, but not its master:

Certainly faith cannot and should not be dependent upon the change and uncertainty of historical research. To expect this of it would be presumptuous and foolish. But no one should despise the help of historical research to illumine the truth with which each of us should be concerned.¹²⁴

If a critical scholar subjects an event to the assessment of the historical method as defined above, and if by this process he cannot affirm the historicity of that event, he must declare that event to be "unhistorical" in terms of modern historical explanation or admit that this approach is incapable of determining what happened. If he still chooses to call the event a historical event in the sense that it happened or that it belongs to the actual past, he must do so at the expense of being out of agreement with the tenor of modern critical scholarship though not necessarily wrong in his judgment. If he stands against the prevailing notion of history, he must be ready to justify in some way his confession of faith in the resurrection of Jesus. Those in the Heilsgeschichte school ulti-

¹²²Ibid. ¹²³Ibid., p. 136.

¹²⁴Günther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, trans. by Irene and Fraser McLuskey, London, 1969, p. 9.

mately appeal to their faith as the final justification for their rejection of the historical-critical approach to Easter. The Pannenberg school, also objecting to the limited grasp of the past by modern historiography, is seeking to re-examine the rules and assumptions of critical historiography.¹²⁵ Both schools, however, want to find historical validity in the resurrection of Jesus which has been rejected by the historical-critical method of interpretation.

In conclusion, the valuable service rendered to biblical scholarship by the historical method is beyond question. More than any other, this method has done much to clarify the historical setting of the Bible as well as to open up vast new areas of inquiry about the source and content of the faith of the early Christians. The use of the historical method has opened up new channels of thought regarding some of the perplexing meanings of New and Old Testament terms, e.g., "Son of Man," "Messiah," "Abba," etc. But, on the other hand, it is this same historical approach which has also concluded in methodology at least that the Christ of the earliest community of Christians is an "unhistorical" person. It is at this point that many theologians believe that this method has ceased being a servant of theology and has instead become its master. Whatever one's prejudices for or against the discipline often called "modern historiography," the method of historical explanation has presented to Christianity one of the strongest and most perplexing challenges it has yet received. In the twentieth century, every serious student of theology, regardless

¹²⁵See Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, trans. by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, London, 1970; Wolfhart Pannenberg, et.al., History and Hermeneutic, Vol. 4 of Journal for Theology and the Church, ed. by Robert W. Funk, New York, 1967; Moltmann, Theology of Hope, op. cit.

of his theological bias, must wrestle with the issues and problems which history has raised for modern religious thought. A more helpful understanding of these challenges and how to meet them is to some extent the aim of the remainder of this thesis.

At this point the writer will now turn his attention to the problems in the Resurrection narratives for the purpose of trying to set forth what it was which the New Testament says happened in the resurrection of Jesus. This question is not as easily answered as it might first appear. There are many problems in the Resurrection narratives which need clarification and analysis; and this will be the purpose of the next two chapters, though it must be said in advance that there are many problems in the following pages which at present do not have simple solutions. At the end of the following discussion, the primary question, i.e., what it was that happened in the resurrection of Jesus, will be raised again and a possible answer set forth.

Throughout this discussion the terms "discrepancy," "contradiction," "difference" and the like will be used; but it must be added that this writer intends each term to be understood as only apparent contradictions, discrepancies, etc. It is always a possibility that the somewhat fragmentary nature of the sources available leaves one without all the facts on which to decide in such matters. Also, this writer does not apologize for a seeming blindness toward the differences in the Scriptures. It is indeed a delicate road on which the theologian must pass between his questioning the Scriptures and yet allowing himself to be questioned by them. Where there is a reasonable possibility of an explanation for basic differences, this writer will generally lean in that direction. It does not necessarily follow that a good sign of biblical scholarship is a generally negative attitude toward the biblical tradition, and it is always a possibility that certain assured results of critical investigation will be changed or discarded in light of subsequent research. For these reasons, this writer intends the term "apparent" to be understood in all such discussions about discrepancies within the Resurrection narratives.

THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVES AND THE PROBLEM OF WHAT HAPPENED

Because there is a tendency among those critical scholars who reject the resurrection of Jesus as an event of history to emphasize the discrepancies within the Resurrection narratives, this chapter and the next will be devoted largely to a discussion of some of these problems, not so much with a harmonization in mind, but with the aim of trying to discover what, according to the New Testament, actually happened in the resurrection of Jesus. It is this writer's primary contention that even though several very serious discrepancies¹ can be found in the Resurrection narratives, the basic message of each of the Evangelists is still quite clear, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified was also raised from the dead.

Several kinds of problems will be encountered in these chapters, not just the difficulties of harmonization. There are problems in the nature of the sources themselves as was seen in Chapter IV including a lack of consistency within individual passages (such as

¹Throughout this discussion the terms "discrepancy," "contradictory," "difference" and the like will be used; but it must be added that this writer intends each term to be understood as only apparent contradictions, discrepancies, etc. It is always a possibility that the somewhat fragmentary nature of the sources available leaves one without all the facts on which to decide in such matters. Also, this writer does not apologize for a seeming blindness toward the differences in the Scriptures. It is indeed a delicate road on which the theologian must pass between his questioning the Scriptures and yet allowing himself to be questioned by them. Where there is a reasonable possibility of an explanation for basic differences, this writer will generally lean in that direction. It does not necessarily follow that a good sign of biblical scholarship is a generally negative attitude toward the biblical tradition, and it is always a possibility that certain assured results of critical investigation will be changed or discarded in light of subsequent research. For these reasons, this writer intends the term "apparent" to be understood in all such discussions about discrepancies within the Resurrection narratives.

John 20:1-18) as well as problems of harmony with the other Resurrection narratives. These will be discussed in this chapter in three basic sections: the nature of the sources themselves, stories relating to the burial of Jesus, and to the empty-tomb tradition. In the next chapter the focus will be upon some of the major questions regarding the appearances of Jesus.

I. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE EASTER TRADITIONS

There are a number of difficulties in the Easter traditions which hinder any attempts to describe accurately what happened in the resurrection of Jesus. The first, of course, is the fact that the Gospel writers never describe the resurrection itself; they only proclaim that Jesus has been raised from the dead. In this sense, then, it is impossible to know what actually happened because there were no witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus; they only encountered him in his post-resurrection appearances. The New Testament, unlike the apocryphal Gospel of Peter,² does not describe or narrate the Easter event. This reserve is due to the fact that no one actually saw what happened on the first Easter morning. There is no doubt, however, in the minds of the New Testament writers that something in fact did happen which could best be described as a resurrection from the dead. The Evangelists narrate the discovery of an empty tomb and the appearance of Jesus to the disciples,³ but beyond that nothing else is said. The Resurrection itself is an inference drawn from the

²See Reginald H. Fuller, The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives, London, 1972, pp. 190-2, for the appropriate verses.

³Mark does not record appearances; but as has been argued previously, this writer believes that the original ending of Mark's Gospel is lost or that Mark, due to some unknown circumstances, was unable to finish it.

appearances and the empty tomb. Some of the earliest proclamations only mention the fact of the Resurrection and simply call for a confession of the resurrection of Jesus without having narrated the event at all (Rom. 10:9). Still others mention the resurrection of Jesus as part of an accepted method of introducing a letter to other Christians (Gal. 1:1; Rom. 1:3-4). In some of the early Christian messages, there existed the belief that by the Resurrection God did not allow Jesus' flesh to see corruption (Acts 2:24-31) but raised him up and indeed exalted him (Acts 2:32-33). Based upon the appearances of Jesus, Easter faith was born, i.e., God had raised up Jesus from the dead and exalted him. That he was seen alive after his death is attested to by witnesses who with assurance could testify to the aliveness of Jesus. Although the event of the Resurrection itself is not described--possibly because of a lack of eyewitnesses, the fact that it happened is argued for in the New Testament on the basis of Jesus' appearances to his disciples (Acts 2:32; I Cor. 15:3-8). Later in the New Testament the empty tomb is also used as a means of proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, e.g., in the message of the angels at the tomb in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 16:6), though it should not be concluded that an empty tomb in and of itself was ever the basis of proclaiming the Resurrection. The empty tomb along with the appearances of Jesus are the two vehicles for proclaiming the Resurrection, but it was only because of the appearances of Jesus that Easter faith was initiated. Easter faith proclaims then that God raised up Jesus from the dead, but how it was that God raised him up is left a mystery.

Another difficulty in ascertaining what happened in the resurrection of Jesus stems from the fact that the only written sources about the event were not written until some thirty or more

years later. The message of Easter was carried on largely by word of mouth in the churches for a considerable period of time. This being the case, it is highly unlikely that the traditions were passed on without some alterations or modifications. Indeed, the fact that the Easter traditions expanded can be seen in the addition of the empty-tomb story to the proclamation of Easter. This does not mean that the empty-tomb tradition is a late invention of the early Church, rather that its inclusion in the main stream of the Easter tradition was not in the earliest preaching of the resurrection of Jesus. The addition of the story to the Easter tradition was perhaps prompted by a later need to show that Jesus' resurrection was not simply a spiritual event. This, of course, is mere speculation, but it is offered as a possibility for explaining why the Church felt the need to add this story. It is clear that the Jewish polemic in claiming that the disciples stole the body of Jesus was the occasion for adding the story of the guard at the tomb in Matthew's Gospel. At any rate, it is difficult to believe that the Easter tradition used in the early Church during the oral stage of its development could have remained fixed. E. Harrison, along with many contemporary New Testament scholars, believes that the oral stage of transmission must certainly have affected the choice of materials used by the evangelists.⁴

Along with this, the identity of the authors of the sources (the Gospels) is a difficult problem because of the inability to distinguish between the author or editor/redactor of the sources. It is also impossible to know finally the precise outline of the shadowy

⁴Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, Grand Rapids, 1964, p. 139.
Grand Rapids

sources in the background that one presumes the editor is handling. This is especially true in Luke 24 and John 20.

These facts alone have been enough to cause many scholars to be highly skeptical about the reliability of the Easter story in the Gospels as well as many of the other stories in these sources. Bultmann's form-critical studies have led him to the belief that the Gospels are primarily records of the faith of the early Christian community rather than a picture of what happened in the career of Jesus. This writer, however, finds it difficult to believe that the early Church, which admittedly owed its very existence to Jesus, would have been so careless with the traditions about him that its very origins remain obscure as Bultmann supposes.⁵ Although it must be admitted that clear lines of development within the Easter traditions are discernible, there is no justification for saying with Bultmann that that which happened to initiate Easter faith is obscure in the traditions.

C. E. B. Cranfield's arguments for the essential reliability of the Gospel traditions are worth noting here. He writes:

- (a) The survival of eyewitnesses, hostile as well as believing, throughout the oral-tradition period must have limited severely the church's freedom to invent and even to embellish.
- (b) The prominence in the NT of the words μάρτυς, μαρτυρέω, μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον . . . implies that the primitive community was conscious of its obligation to tell the truth (the word μάρτυς means primarily a witness in court)
- (c) The main outline of events, especially the story of the Passion, must have been constantly repeated in preaching and liturgy, and so kept clear in the memory.
- (d) The fact that the church grew up within the Jewish community, a community with a long-established and highly revered oral tradition of its own, must not be forgotten. Among the rabbis the most meticulous care was taken to preserve the oral tradition of their teachers unaltered.
- (e) The form of much of the teaching of Jesus (poetry, epigram, parable) made it particularly easy to remember accurately.
- (f) The respect paid

⁵Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1970-1, I, 45.

by the later evangelists to Mark is something we should not expect if the early church had really felt free to invent and embellish as some would have us believe. (g) The presence of Semitisms in many of the sayings of Jesus and also in many of the narratives of the gospel . . . tells strongly against any theory which sees in it corruptions of the tradition due to Hellenistic influences. (h) The fact that the material which was discredit-able to Peter and the other apostles, and, still more, such sayings of Jesus as his admission of ignorance of the date of the Parousia (13:32) and his cry of dereliction on the cross (15:34), which we know puzzled and embarrassed the early church, had been preserved, goes a long way toward guaranteeing the general reliability of the tradition.⁶

F. V. Filson would not accept all of these arguments about the preserving of the oral traditions in the early Church because he does not find reason to believe that the early Church carried any control over them. However, he does conclude that the stories in the Gospels are reasonably stable because of the Jewish method of handing on traditions.⁷

Although it may be admitted that a number of areas are rather obscure in the Easter narratives (e.g., the time of discovery of the empty tomb, the location and nature of the appearances, etc.), what happened on the first Easter morning was never one of those areas in the mind of the early Church. It may be conceded that the Easter traditions grew; but never was that which is common to all of them, i.e., the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, in serious doubt. The unifying factor in the Easter traditions which initiates and gives birth to Easter faith is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, whatever may have been involved in that event.

A simple examination of the Gospels, or any of the New Testa-

⁶C. E. B. Cranfield, "Gospel of Mark," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, New York, 1962, III, 271.

⁷Floyd V. Filson, A New Testament History, London, 1971, pp. 72-3.

ment literature for that matter, will show that the writers wrote with a freedom totally foreign to modern historiographers. This was due in part to the transforming effects of their Easter experience and also to the popular non-professional character of the early Christian community. Different problems faced the varying recipients of the early proclamation, and it seems quite reasonable to assume that these varying needs of the early Christian communities must have been on the minds of the Gospel writers in their selection of materials to include in their gospels. This, however, should not be a matter of alarm unless the critic forces upon the Gospel writers modern standards which were not employed by writers of that day. To be sure, each Evangelist was writing a call to Christian faith and was not interested in setting forth an unbiased "objective" report of events in the life of Jesus. Each sought to present what he considered to be a factual disclosure of certain words and deeds of Jesus which he set forth in such a manner as to produce a call to faith. A so-called "objective" report is not to be found anywhere in the New Testament. Indeed, such a report would hardly have been claimed by the early Christian community whose commitment to their Risen Lord cost many of them their lives.

Returning to the above point, it must be emphasized again that each writer was addressing himself to a group of believers facing specific problems; and this fact surely must have guided the Evangelists' selection of materials from the traditions about Jesus being circulated in the Church at the time of their writing.⁸ The Sitz im Leben of the early Church must have been upon the minds of

⁸This assertion is almost universally accepted by New Testament scholars and does not need amplification.

the Evangelists as they selected the traditions about Jesus for composing/compiling their Gospels. Certainly no writer has the complete story of Jesus; and, given the limitations of the amount which could be written on one papyrus roll,⁹ a certain selectivity on the part of the Evangelists was necessary.¹⁰

Perhaps some of the differences in the Gospels may be explained in the above manner. No doubt many historical details were omitted at the time of composition which the modern historian needs in order to reconstruct a more accurate picture of the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus; but such details were unimportant, evidently, to the Evangelists who were more concerned about presenting a call to faith. The four Gospels were never intended to be harmonized; and the early Church seemed quite willing to allow them, with all of their differences, to stand side by side.¹¹ Although the Gospels are dealing with the same person and covering many of the same events, the writers were men of differing backgrounds, facing different issues and needs in the communities to which they were writing. Such considerations, as well as the possible use of differing traditions in existence during the time of writing, probably were major contributing factors in shaping the Gospel narratives, especially the Passion and Resurrection stories.

Now, in light of the above, what can be said of the numerous discrepancies in the Easter narratives? In the rest of this chapter

⁹Stephen Neill, What We Know About Jesus, London, 1970, p. 51, says the Gospel of Luke is about at the maximum limit.

¹⁰John 20:30-31 indicates the basis as well as the fact of selectivity used by that Evangelist. This can also be seen in the hyperbole in the Appendix of John 21:25.

¹¹John 21 appears to be an exception to this.

and in the next, most of these problems will be discussed in some detail; and it will be shown that the discrepancies are not inconsiderable. Some of the problems of harmony may be fairly easily dismissed, e.g., the number of angels at the tomb, the number of women coming to the tomb, the message of the angels, etc.; but others are much more significant and require careful attention, e.g., the location and nature of the appearances. The discrepancies in the Resurrection narratives have been variously interpreted and emphasized or minimized owing to one's understanding of miracle. Those who believe that Jesus Christ did rise from the grave tend to minimize the historical and philosophical objections to what is believed to be the foundation of Christian faith.¹² On the other hand, those who reject the possibility of such an event have tended to emphasize the above discrepancies in the narratives.¹³

How significant are the problems of harmony in the Gospels as well as those between Paul and the Gospels? This writer believes that it is wrong on the one hand to de-emphasize the problems and also unfair on the other hand to allow them to take the primary focus of one's attention. Although there are problems of considerable importance, e.g., the nature of the Resurrection appearances and their location, the basic assertion in the New Testament is the aliveness of Jesus after the crucifixion, the significance of which is considerable for all who place their trust in him. To what extent is credibility of the resurrection of Jesus in doubt if some of the

¹²Cf. Clark H. Pinnock, "On the Third Day," Jesus of Nazareth: Saviour and Lord, ed. by Carl F. H. Henry, London, 1966, pp. 145-56.

¹³Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 45-8. See Xavier Léon-Dufour, The Gospels and the Jesus of History, ed. and trans. by John McHugh, London, 1968, p. 254.

details of this event cannot be harmonized? Is there a way through the maze of difficulties in the sources which will be favorable to the event to which they all give testimony? Is it at all possible to know what actually happened in the resurrection of Jesus? This writer believes that a careful examination of the Resurrection narratives provides a generally positive response to that question even though there are many questions which continue to remain unanswered. In the following sections of this chapter and the next, an attempt will be made to deal with the problems in the Resurrection narratives with the hope of coming closer to an understanding of the original event which gave rise to Easter faith.

II. THE STORIES OF THE BURIAL OF JESUS

The Kinds of Problems in the Burial Stories

In the Gospels there are a number of differences in the various burial-of-Jesus stories; however, there are also a good many consistencies which strongly indicate a common origin of all of the accounts. In all four Gospel narratives, it is Joseph of Arimathea who requested and received from Pilate the body of Jesus for burial purposes; and it was Joseph who prepared the body with a linen shroud (John says Nicodemus helped). Joseph also placed the body of Jesus in the tomb (John indicates that Nicodemus helped). All four Gospels also agree that the day of the burial was the Day of Preparation (Friday) just prior to the beginning of the Sabbath.

Beyond these common agreements, Mark and Matthew both say that Joseph rolled the stone against the door of the tomb after the body had been placed inside. Luke and John have no mention of Joseph rolling the stone against the tomb, but this could be inferred from the surprise of the women in the next chapter (Lk. 24:2-4; or Mary,

Jn. 20:1) at the stone being rolled away. It is somewhat surprising that a mention of the stone being rolled away should come in Luke and John since neither say that the tomb was sealed. This could possibly be an indication of Luke's and John's dependence upon some common source as will be suggested later. Along with this, Mark simply says Jesus' body was placed in a tomb (15:46), while Matthew calls it "his own new tomb which he (evidently Joseph) had hewn in the rock" (27:40). Luke and John are once again in agreement when they describe the tomb as one "where no one had ever yet been laid" (Luke 23:53) and "where no one had ever been laid" (John 29:41). Luke and John are different at this point only in that Luke also calls the tomb a "rock-hewn" tomb, and John calls it a "new" tomb.

Further, in John 19:38 Joseph asks for the body in secret, but Mark 15:43 says Joseph "took courage" and went to Pilate to request the body. Mark seems to indicate that the action was in the open while John says it was in private. The secret nature of the request (John) is evidently unknown to Matthew who shows that the whereabouts of the tomb where Jesus was laid was known to the Roman guard and Jewish leaders.¹⁴ Along with this, the Synoptics make no mention of Joseph adding spices or ointments to the body during the preparation for burial. John alone introduces this thought along with the only mention of Nicodemus' helping Joseph prepare the body (John 19:39-42). John is also by himself in his failure to mention the presence of the women at the burial of Jesus.¹⁵ Mark says Mary

¹⁴Although this could possibly be inferred since Mary Magdalene, a Galilean, seemed to know exactly where the tomb of Jesus was, even in the dark. Cf. John 20:1.

¹⁵It is possible that since none of the Gospels indicate that the women watched the burial preparation, only the placing of the body in the tomb, that there is no contradiction in the double appli-

Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph watched the burial. Matthew simply says it was Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary" while Luke says it was the women who came with Jesus from Galilee who watched.

Besides the above differences in the burial stories, there are a few other problems which will be mentioned here and then later discussed. First, who supplied the anointing spices and ointments? Mark and Luke say that the women came to the tomb on the first day of the week to bring spices, but John says the spices and ointments were brought by Nicodemus before Jesus was laid in the tomb. Secondly, is not the careful burial preparation (Jn. 19:40; Mk. 15:46) inconsistent with the fact that haste had to be made due to the rapidly approaching Sabbath (Jn. 19:42; Lk. 23:54)? Thirdly, Bultmann believes that the women coming to the tomb to embalm the body of Jesus after two nights and a day would be impossible given the climate of the Middle East.¹⁶ Fourthly, Bultmann contends that the burial of Jesus was complete and the women were obviously witnesses to this fact (Mk. 15:47); but if so, why did the women come to the

cation of spices. It could well be that the body was adequately prepared by Joseph (and Nicodemus? Jn. 19:39); but the women, not knowing this, came to complete what they thought was necessary to complete the burial rites--or simply to show respect. See this discussed in the following treatment of the burial problems.

¹⁶Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. by John Marsh, Oxford, 1968, p. 285. Willi Marxsen believes that Matthew deliberately altered Mark's text at this point because in reflection he knew that it was impossible to undertake the anointing of a body on the third day, ". . . for the process of mortification would have already begun. Consequently Matthew strikes out this feature of his copy of Mark." Willi Marxsen, The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, trans. by Margaret Kohl, London, 1970, p. 45. However, it is more probable that Matthew omitted the story about the spices because he already had stated that the tomb was sealed and had a guard posted (27:66). For Matthew the women probably came to the tomb out of a simple devotion and not necessarily with the purpose of anointing the body of Jesus, though this is not definite.

tomb at all on the first day of the week?¹⁷ Finally, the question arises, who buried Jesus? Although all four Evangelists agree that it was Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus (Matt. 23:57), Acts 13:29 seems to say that it was the enemies of Christ.

Such are the kinds of questions and problems relating to the burial stories in the Gospels. The following discussion will be an attempt to bring some of the varying strands of testimony into a more consistent understanding of what really happened. It is quite possible, however, that in discussing some of these problems ~~that~~ the several similarities in all of the Gospels will be overlooked. With regard to the burial of Jesus, the problems are not nearly so great as with the empty-tomb stories and especially with the appearances stories. What could be noted here and will be indicated frequently throughout this chapter are the several places where Luke and John agree with each other but not with Mark and Matthew, e.g., no mention of rolling the stone against the tomb, the use of a tomb "where no one had yet been placed," the linen clothes in the empty tomb, the presence of two angels, the location of the appearances in Jerusalem, and the mention of an ascension. Each similarity in itself conveys very little, but together the several similarities tend to suggest a common source used by both Luke and John in their Resurrection narratives which may or may not be as early as the Markan tradition. Since Luke was written earlier than John,¹⁸ and since John shows

¹⁷Bultmann, loc. cit. Bultmann believes that this inconsistency in Mark points to the secondary nature of the empty-tomb tradition in Mark and that this also indicates that 16:1-8 was not constructed with the chronology in mind which controlled Mark. Ibid., p. 285n.

¹⁸There seems to be little doubt about this among critical scholars.

little dependence upon Luke or similarity to him in his depiction of the appearances, it seems likely that they both had a common source. Apart from the material form of the appearances and their location, John and Luke are quite different, i.e., Luke's empty-tomb story, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the appearance to the disciples, and his understanding of the Ascension are quite foreign to John. On the other hand, Luke, unlike John, has no major emphasis on the Holy Spirit (except a promise in Acts 1:8 and possibly Lk. 24:49) or the kind of Ascension which John portrays.¹⁹ It seems, therefore, that the similarities in Luke and John are due to a common source rather than dependence of one on the other. They evidently felt free to draw upon or make use of this source in a way which best fit their own purpose.

Overall then, there appears to be a Markan tradition (Matthew showing dependence upon Mark) and a tradition common to both Luke and John, which may be equal in importance to the Markan tradition though not necessarily so. These traditions dominated the Resurrection narratives, though each Evangelist took the liberty to add to these traditions that which contributed to his own purposes; e.g., Matthew added the apologetic story of the guard at the tomb while Luke supplied the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. John also, showing his concern for a later generation of Christians, added the story of the special appearance to Thomas, etc.

A Discussion of Some of the Problems

The following discussion includes three of the more obvious discrepancies in the burial stories and some suggested solutions to a

¹⁹This problem will be discussed under the appearances.

few of the more difficult problems mentioned above.

Who provided the spices? Is there a discrepancy between John on the one hand, who says the spices were provided by Nicodemus, and Mark and Luke on the other, who say that the women brought the spices? It could be that the answer lies in the ignorance of the women on how the body was prepared for burial, they having only seen the burial itself, i.e., the laying of the body in the tomb. From there, it is a matter of whether much is to be made of the silence of John and Matthew about the women (or Mary in John) and the spices. Should it be assumed that in all four Gospels the purpose of the coming of the women (woman) to the tomb on the first day of the week was to anoint the body with spices? It would certainly be an argument from silence to do so, but in the final analysis it cannot be ruled out as will be shown later.

Bultmann's assertion that Mark 15:46 indicates that the burial of Jesus was complete and needed nothing further²⁰ does not take into consideration the possible ignorance of the women on the manner in which the body was prepared for burial. Along with this, his view does not allow that this act was simply one of devotion on the part of the women either. Because of the lateness of the day when Jesus was buried, they probably did not have time to pay their final respects of devotion and honor to their fallen Master. On the Day of Preparation (or Friday, παρασκευή) there was only enough time to do the most necessary of obligations, and any further acts of devotion could be postponed until after the Sabbath.

²⁰Bultmann, loc. cit.

The elaborate burial procedures. Now, what about the passages which indicate the elaborate wrapping of Jesus' body in burial clothes (a shroud) and the fact that the Sabbath was fast approaching and great haste was made? All four narratives point to the special wrapping of Jesus' body. Matthew (27:57), Mark (15:42), Luke (23:54), and John (19:42) all indicate that the Day of Preparation was almost over and the Sabbath was approaching and some haste was necessary. Perhaps Joseph L. Lilly has the answer to this problem. He points out that the Talmud in the treatise dealing with the Sabbath rest permits all necessary steps for decent burial on the Sabbath and that ". . . the duty of burying the dead was thus regarded as taking precedence over other laws whenever there should be a conflict."²¹ Since Deuteronomy 21:23 expressly states that the body of a condemned man could not hang upon a tree all night but had to be buried "the same day," there seems to be no contradiction on the elaborate nature of the burial story of Jesus which took place on a late Friday afternoon as the Sabbath was approaching. Also, the elaborate burial given to Jesus (Mark 15:46; John 19:39-41) is not necessarily in conflict with the lateness of the Day of Preparation (or the beginning of the Sabbath) or the fact that he died a criminal's death since ". . . they may make ready (on the Sabbath or on a feast day) all that is needful for the dead, and anoint it and wash it, provided they do not move any member of it."²² Therefore, according to Lilly, everything necessary for a decent burial, includ-

²¹Joseph L. Lilly, "Alleged Discrepancies in the Gospel Accounts of the Resurrection," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 2:103-4, 1940.

²²Shab. 23:5 cited by Joachim Jeremias, Eucharistic Words of Jesus, trans. by A. Ehrhardt, New York, 1955, p. 76.

ing washing and anointing, was carried out before Jesus was placed in the tomb.²³ For this reason Lilly says the Evangelists, who were familiar with Palestinian conditions and customs, could not have attributed to the women the intention of coming to embalm the body of Jesus three days after burial.²⁴

The intention of the women, Lilly claims, was in keeping with a Palestinian custom of visiting graves for three days after burial. This custom stemmed from the belief that the soul of the deceased remained in or near the body for three days.²⁵ Lilly states that the bringing of spices and ointments for anointing as a Palestinian custom is similar to the modern custom of bringing flowers or wreaths to the graveside of loved ones. He cites as proof one example from Josephus²⁶ in which there were five hundred pounds of perfumes brought for the burial of Herod I which were used quite apart from those used to embalm the body.²⁷

It may be admitted, therefore, that Bultmann is right when he believes Mark 15:46 indicates that the burial of Jesus was complete; but it should be asked, do Mark 16:1 and Luke 24:1 indicate otherwise? If Lilly is correct, the act on the part of the women is one of devotion and respect for their beloved master, not one of completion of the burial rites. It is possible that Nicodemus supplied all the necessary spices for the burial; and the women only intended to offer their spices and ointments out of love and devotion, not out of any sense of obligation to complete the burial rites. Clearly, this

²³Lilly, loc. cit. ²⁴Ibid., p. 104. ²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Josephus, Antiquities, XVII, viii, 3; Jewish Wars, I, xxiii, 9.

²⁷Lilly, op. cit., pp. 104-5.

is all speculation and reading something into the text which may not be there; but it does pose the possibility of a harmony of the above questions. However, the question of why the women visited the tomb should not be one of great importance. Whether it was to anoint the body of Jesus (Mark and Luke) or just to visit the tomb (Matthew and John) is not vital information. Both motivations (or a number of them) are plausible; but the important fact is, as Bode puts it, "The women came and that is enough."²⁸

Who buried Jesus? One of the more significant problems in the burial stories is the question of who buried Jesus. All four Gospels state quite clearly that it was Joseph of Arimathea; but Acts 13:29 strangely attributes this act to the enemies of Jesus, the Jews. Hans Grass takes up the view that the Acts passage is pre-Lukan and is in fact an accurate portrayal of the burial of Jesus. He believes that the Joseph story is late and that Jesus was laid in a common grave without any special burial preparation, such as the Gospels indicate, because this is what was done to executed criminals at that time.²⁹

Following Grass, R. H. Fuller also believes that Acts 13:29 is an earlier tradition than the burial stories found in the Gospels.³⁰ He believes that Jesus' body was removed from the cross by his enemies and placed in a common grave as was the custom in those days. This, he concludes, makes Mark 16:1-8 more naturally an early

²⁸Edward Lynn Bode, The First Easter Morning. The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus, Rome, 1970, p. 173.

²⁹Hans Grass, Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte, Göttingen, 1962, pp. 179-80.

³⁰Fuller, op. cit., pp. 54-6.

part of the Gospel tradition (contra Bultmann), and the burial stories of the Gospels can be explained as a subsequent addition to the original tradition the purpose of which was to prevent Jesus from suffering the final shame of an improper burial.³¹ He argues that the Acts 13:29 passage is correct and that the story of the women coming to the tomb to complete the burial rites is quite in order since before then the body of Jesus had simply been disposed of by those who buried him. The burial story in the Gospels, then, is a legend begun by Mark to make the final act of hostility toward Jesus one of charity.³² Mark's statement that Joseph of Arimathea was a respected member of the council and one who was looking for the kingdom of God (15:43) was later developed in the Gospel tradition to the point where Joseph was called a "disciple" (Matt. 27:57). Fuller then concludes that it was the Markan burial story on which all of the Evangelists drew, and not the empty-tomb story which was at variance with the rest of the Resurrection narratives.³³

Fuller believes that the difference in the names of the women in the burial and empty-tomb stories can be attributed to later attempts to square the empty-tomb tradition with the names in the burial story. Originally, according to Fuller, there was only Mary Magdalene at the tomb (Jn. 20:1).³⁴ Fuller also takes up Ulrich

³¹Ibid. ³²Ibid., pp. 54-5.

³³Ibid. Fuller is arguing here against Bultmann's statement that, "The story of the women on Easter morning is a quite secondary formulation which originally neither went with the preceding sections of Mark--for otherwise, after 15:40, 47 the women in 16:1 would not have been named again, and their intention to embalm the body does not agree with 15:46 where there is never so much as a thought that the burial was incomplete or provisional--nor, in my view, with the supposed end of Mark which must have recounted the appearance of Jesus in Galilee." Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 284-5.

³⁴Fuller, loc. cit

Wilckens' thesis that when the disciples returned from Galilee after receiving their visions, they heard the report from Mary Magdalene about the empty tomb and were pleased with the story because it was in accord with their experience.³⁵ Mary's report was then attached to the passion narrative as a vehicle for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus.³⁶

The major difficulty this writer has with Fuller and Grass at this point is their willingness to sacrifice the four-fold Gospel testimony concerning the burial of Jesus--which, in spite of the several discrepancies, is remarkably harmonious--in favor of this interpretation of Acts 13:29. Even Bultmann who is generally quite skeptical about the Resurrection narratives finds little in the burial stories which point to a later legendary influence. Concerning the burial story in Mark, Bultmann writes:

This is an historical account which creates no impression of being a legend apart from the women who appear again as witnesses in v. 47, and vv, 44, 45 which Matthew and Luke in all probability did not have in their Mark. It can hardly be shown that the section was devised with the Easter story in mind.³⁷

Gerald O'Collins contends that Luke used an unreliable source in the speech which was reportedly given by Paul in Acts 13, because in the witnesses to the Resurrection which are given in verse 31 there is no mention of Paul. This passage, according to O'Collins, represents Paul:

... not as appealing to his own encounter with the risen Christ but as relying exclusively on other witnesses to the resurrection! As Luke fails in this speech to portray accurately the historical Paul, we can hardly insist on the strict reliability of a vague remark about Jesus' burial.³⁸

Rather than opt for one tradition over against another, F. F. Bruce

³⁵Ibid. ³⁶Ibid. ³⁷Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

³⁸Gerald O'Collins, *The Easter Jesus*, London, 1973, p. 39.

says that it is possible to work out a harmony of the two by allowing the enemies to remove the body from the cross, as seems possible from John 19:31, and yet to allow Joseph (and Nicodemus) at the same time to take care of the burial itself.³⁹ This, however, does not seem to solve the problems, especially because Acts 13:29 has the enemies of Jesus not only taking him down from the cross, but also placing him in the tomb. Another explanation which cannot be accepted is that of Johannes Munck who calls the final clause of Acts 13:29 a passive construction! He writes, "A passive construction is used instead of the active 'they took him down' for the agent might be Romans, the Jews, or the disciples."⁴⁰ This he believes would allow for the disciples taking care of the burial rather than Jesus' enemies. It must be countered, however, that in the clause in question the participle *καθελόντες* and the verb *ἔθηκαν* are both in the active voice. It would be difficult to argue for a passive construction when there is nothing passive in the whole clause. What perhaps may be the correct way to view this problem, however, is to say with Bruce that *καθελόντες* and *ἔθηκαν* are "generalizing" plurals, i.e., that Luke does not specifically wish to say that the enemies of Jesus actually buried him.⁴¹ R. P. C. Hanson seems to go along with this in saying that Luke's representing of the Jews as burying Jesus is a result of his "condensed style" and not his deliberate intention.⁴² A point perhaps in favor of this view is that the author of Luke-Acts prob-

³⁹F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, Grand Rapids, 1968, p. 268.

⁴⁰Johannes Munck, The Acts of the Apostles, Garden City, 1967, p. 123.

⁴¹Bruce, loc. cit.

⁴²R. P. C. Hanson, The Acts, Oxford, 1967, p. 143.

ably would not have Joseph perform the burial rites in one part of his work (Luke) and then be inconsistent with that in the second part of his work (Acts). Hans Conzelmann accepts the inconsistency, however, and says that this "pre-Lukan" passage (Acts 13:29) was simply not adopted in his narrative of the burial story. He says that Luke ". . . was not aware of the original meaning of this passage."⁴³

Clearly there are a number of alternatives in trying to give a reason for the discrepancy between the Gospels and the Acts at this point. Because of the multiple attestation of the Gospels, this writer prefers to accept that account of the burial and Resurrection which states that the burial was performed by Joseph of Arimathea and yet allow with O'Collins for the possibility of a discrepancy in Luke's source for the Acts 13 passage, or for the possibility of Bruce's "generalizing" plurals in the clause in question. Whatever the explanation, this writer finds it difficult to call the very strong testimony of four Evangelists--they are more agreed on the burial of Jesus than on any other aspect of the Resurrection narratives--a late, as well as legendary, insertion into the Resurrection stories.

Edward L. Bode along with Loisy (Marc) argues here that since Joseph did not hold any place in the remembrances in relation to the organization of the earliest community of Christians, he is to be regarded as something of an "outsider" and consequently not the kind of person who would have been drawn into an invented story.⁴⁴

Lloyd Geering, on the other hand, holds that because Arima-

⁴³Hans Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke, trans. by Geoffrey Buswell, London, 1960, pp. 88, 202.

⁴⁴Bode, op. cit., p. 160n.

thea is not known as a place from any other source, it is an imagined site like the later Emmaus.⁴⁵ "Joseph," he says, may have been used to personalize the unknown Jew who was presumed by Mark to have been responsible for the burial of Jesus. The name "Joseph" was possibly used "... because of the biblical tradition which told of the care with which Joseph, the patriarch, transported the body of his father all the way back to Machpelah for burial."⁴⁶ He concludes then that the form and content of Mark's burial story is no guarantee of its genuineness and that this "Joseph story" is a later addition.

However, the location of Arimathea is not as unknown as Geering would have one believe, and certainly not as problematic as the whereabouts of Emmaus. Although it cannot be conclusively demonstrated, there does appear to be a willingness of many scholars to equate Ἀριμαθαίας (probably from the Hebrew **הַרְמַתִּים**) with one of several places, and not to a figment of the imagination. It is possible to identify Arimathea with Ἀρμαθὲμ Σειφά (Ramathaim-zophim), the city of Elkanah and Samuel (I Sam. 1:1) near Diospolis in the district of Timnah. The LXX form of Ramathaim (**הַרְמַתִּים**) is Ἀρμαθαίμ.⁴⁷ Also, the virtual lack of any similarity between Joseph of Arimathea and the Joseph in Genesis 50:1-14 make Geering's view far from convincing.

For this writer the basic problem in identifying Joseph of Arimathea has to do with whether he was indeed a follower of Jesus

⁴⁵Lloyd Geering, Resurrection: A Symbol of Hope, London, 1971, p. 47.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷For other possibilities see K. W. Clark, "Arimathea," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, New York, 1962, I, 219.

(Matt. 27:57 "a disciple"). Mark only mentions the fact that he was a respected member of the council⁴⁸ and "looking for the kingdom of God" (15:43). Matthew takes this to mean that he was a disciple, and Luke understands that Joseph was a "good and righteous man" as well as one who "was looking for the kingdom of God" (23:51). If this is true, however, it is a wonder why the women did not participate in the burial mentioned in all four Gospels as taking place under the direction of Joseph of Arimathea. In the Synoptics they are observers, but one would gather that it was from a distance. If Joseph were in fact not a follower of Jesus but a respected member of "the council" who was anxious to do what was right, then the Acts 13:29 passage may not be far from right, i.e., that the burial was performed by the enemies of Christ. The problem here of course is that if Joseph were not a follower of Jesus, then why would he have provided such an expensive burial place for him? John also calls Joseph a "disciple" of Jesus and includes another disciple (by inference), Nicodemus, in the burial story. Along with this, it is doubtful whether the Evangelists--at this stage in the Church's development--separated a disciple of Jesus from one who was looking forward to the kingdom of God. Such an assertion, however, would be difficult to prove.

In conclusion, therefore, Joseph of Arimathea was probably a disciple of Jesus and was responsible for his burial. The four-fold testimony to this in the Gospels far outweighs the problematic assertion of Acts 13:29 and the accuracy of the source/s behind this Acts speech and/or the most obvious interpretation of it--i.e., the ene-

⁴⁸Presumably the town council of Jerusalem, but this is not clear.

mies buried Jesus--must be held in question.

In closing, it should be added that the above suggested solutions to the various problems of harmony are simply offered as possibilities, and they are not to be taken as dogmatic assertions. Also, in spite of the several variations in the accounts of the burial story, there is at least one basic message in all of them, including the Acts 13 speech, to wit, that Jesus of Nazareth who died on a cross was buried in a tomb. In the next two sections it will be shown that in spite of the various differences in the narratives, all of the Evangelists agree that this Jesus who was placed in a tomb was also raised from that tomb to life.

III. THE EMPTY TOMB TRADITION

A Discussion of Some of the Discrepancies

It is quite common among scholars to point to the various problems in the empty-tomb tradition as evidence that the story is a later addition to the Resurrection narratives in the development of the Gospel tradition.⁴⁹ In this section the kinds of problems or discrepancies will be listed with little comment and with the purpose of getting an overall survey or synopsis of the various empty-tomb descriptions. Some of the more serious discrepancies will be discussed in some detail, but many of the others will only receive passing notice. The second section will focus on the consistencies in the empty-tomb traditions and other important questions.

The following problems will be listed in a numerical order

⁴⁹Cf. William Lillie's observation of this tendency in his essay, "The Empty Tomb and the Resurrection," Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament, ed. by M. C. Perry, London, 1965, VI, 126.

which will correspond to a large extent to the basic chronological sequence in the narratives themselves.

1. The time of the discovery of the empty tomb. Although all four Gospels indicate that the day of the women's (or Mary's) discovery was early on the first day of the week, the actual time of the morning seems to vary. In Mark the discovery came "when the sun had risen" (16:2); in John it was "while it was still dark" (10:1); 2/ Matthew says "toward the dawn of the first day" (28:1); and Luke says "at early dawn" (24:1). Clearly, there is a strong difference between Mark and John ("the sun had risen" vs. "while it was still dark"), but Matthew and Luke are quite close to each other. It also appears that Matthew and Luke are closer to John than to Mark at this point, and it is doubtful whether many problems would have been raised if John were more like Mark or vice versa. Matthew and Luke could probably be made to agree with either John or Mark.

Joseph Lilly offers two explanations for the difference between Mark and John. First, he says it is possible that while the women were on their way to the tomb they needed to purchase the spices. Mary Magdalene left this task to the other women and went to the tomb by herself, and the others came later "when the sun had risen" to join her.⁵⁰ His second explanation is derived from a possible translation of ἐρχεται πρωὶ σκοτίας ἐτι οὕσης in John 20:1. If Mary "is on her way before daylight," the emphasis of the passage here then is on the beginning of the journey to the tomb which was "while it was dark." Lilly's first explanation is quite foreign to Mark who writes that the women (i.e., note the plural, ἐρχονται) went

⁵⁰Lilly, op. cit., pp. 106-7.

to the tomb when the sun had risen. Mark makes no room for a separation of the women. Lilly's second explanation, emphasizing the present tense of ἔρχονται (John 20:1), fails to consider that such a literal translation, even if possible in this context, would demand that he translate Mark 16:2 ἔρχονται with the same present force. If this were done, Mark's women would begin their trip "when the sun had risen" and Mary in John would begin her journey "while it was still dark." Such explanations are not convincing.

J. Jeremias has observed that in Mark when two references to time are given, where one of the references appears to be unnecessary, there seems to be a rule that the second is further intended to explain the former. In Mark 16:2 the "very early" (λίαν πρωΐ) could be before the sun rose or afterwards, but the "when the sun had risen" is intended to clarify more carefully the "very early."⁵¹ If this is correct, A. G. Hebert's theological explanation that "very early" refers to the time, but "when the sun had risen" refers to Jesus himself, is even less plausible than it is fanciful.⁵² Whether it is possible on the other hand to consider "darkness" as a theological concept in John is uncertain. Raymond Brown suggests that "darkness" is appropriate for John because the empty tomb to Mary meant that someone had stolen the body of Jesus.⁵³ Although John frequently uses signs or themes in his Gospel to point to the work of Christ in progression or finished, it cannot be argued convincingly

⁵¹Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-8. Cf. 1:32, 35; 4:35; 10:30; 13:24; 14:12, *etc.*

⁵²A. Gabriel Hebert, "The Resurrection-Narrative in St. Mark's Gospel," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 15:66-ff., March, 1962.

⁵³Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, New York, 1970, p. 981.

that anything other than a time factor is indicated by John's "while it was still dark."⁵⁴

What remains to be said here is that there appears to be no way to fix definitively the time factor relating to the discovery of the empty tomb. All of the Evangelists, however, are agreed that it took place early in the morning on the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday.⁵⁵

2. The number and names of the women coming to the tomb. In a simple comparison of the four Gospels, it is plain to see that the Evangelists disagree on who came to the tomb on the first Easter morning. Mark says it was three women who made the journey to the tomb: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (16:1). Matthew, however, only mentions Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" as going to the tomb (28:1), while Luke says it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James as well as "the other women with them" (24:10).⁵⁶ John mentions but one name, Mary Magdalene (20:1), in his version of the empty-tomb story; but, while there is no direct mention of any other women present, the οἱ ὄντες (v. 2) has been used

⁵⁴John's frequent use of the term "light" (φῶς) in reference to Christ (e.g., 8:12; 9:5; 12:35), or "darkness" (σκοτία) in contrast to the "Light" (e.g., 1:5; 3:19; 12:35, where "darkness" is clearly unrighteousness or evil), bears no parallel to John's use of σκοτία in 20:1.

⁵⁵Both Mark and John use the term πρωί, which at the least means "early," though it is not definite how early. Luke's ὀρθρου βαθείω, (24:1) means simply "at early dawn," and although Matthew's ὅψε δὲ σαββάτων (28:1) is a difficult expression due to the repetition of the σαββάτων (v. 1)--it is unlikely that it refers to "late on the Sabbath," especially because of the ἐπιφωσκούση (the "break of dawn" or "nearing of dawn"), it is more likely that Matthew also intends the discovery to be early on the first day of the week near dawn.

⁵⁶In Luke 23:55 these women are simply called those who accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem from Galilee.

by some scholars to bring John in line with the other Evangelists.⁵⁷ Jeremias, on the other hand, believes that the first person plural of verse 2 is the influence of Galilean Aramaic in which the substitution of the "we" for "I" (οἱ δὲ αὐτοὶ for οὗτος) is idiomatic.⁵⁸ He points to the return to the singular οὗτος (v. 13) instead of the plural as evidence for this view. He also suggests that the presence of οἱ δὲ αὐτοὶ could be the result of some Synoptic influence on John.⁵⁹ Bultmann, who calls John 20:2 an "editorial connective" for the purpose of joining of verses 1, 11-ff. with verses 3-10, says with Jeremias that the "we" of verse 2 is a Semitic way of speaking with Greek analogues and is not a genuine plural.⁶⁰ Raymond Brown disagrees with Bultmann and Jeremias here because according to him they do not explain adequately the switch back to οὗτος in verse 13. If the "we" was used for the first person singular, he asks, why does the singular appear in verse 13?⁶¹ Brown believes it is probable that the "we" (vs. 2) is a reference to the other women who were present with Mary at the tomb.⁶² Whether or not others were present with Mary Magdalene, however, is still a matter of debate. Eduard Schweizer says that the Church's tendency to expand its traditions leads him to the conclusion that John's empty-tomb story is the

⁵⁷Lilly, op. cit., p. 105.

⁵⁸Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 304-5n.

⁵⁹Ibid. C. K. Barrett also believes the οἱ δὲ αὐτοὶ is an example of Synoptic influence upon John, but is careful to mention that this word itself does not stem from that tradition. He admits, however, that no such report of the "stolen" body exists in the Synoptic tradition. Cf. C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, London, 1967, p. 468.

⁶⁰Rudolf Bultmann, The Gospel of John, ed. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches, Philadelphia, 1971, p. 684.

⁶¹Brown, op. cit., p. 984. ⁶²Ibid.

earliest one especially because Mary Magdalene alone is common to all the Evangelists and she alone, according to John, was at the tomb first.⁶³ He reasons that if this story were a late fabrication to prove the reality of the resurrection of the body, there would have been more witnesses on hand to testify to that fact.⁶⁴

At any rate, it is obvious that John wishes to spotlight Mary Magdalene in his empty-tomb story. If there were other women present, John only pays a passing reference to them (*i.e.*, οἱδόμεν). It is puzzling why Matthew, who certainly drew upon Mark, omitted Salome from his list of women. All three of the Synoptic accounts mention two Marys (*i.e.*, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James--or the "other Mary," cf. Matt. 28:1), but only Mark mentions "Salome" (16:1) and only Luke mentions "Joanna" (24:10). Luke's "other women with them" may be in some sense parallel to John's "we" (20:2), but one could not be dogmatic here. If Schweizer's view on the "expanding tendency" in the early Church is to be followed--*i.e.*, going from John's Mary Magdalene to Mark's Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, then why is it that Matthew has fewer names than Mark in his narrative of the story? Surely Matthew was written after Mark, and Matthew has more of an apologetic "tendency" than does Mark!

It seems as though the way through the list of names is either to admit with R. H. Fuller, E. Schweizer, and others that only Mary Magdalene was present, and the Synoptic Gospels expanded this

⁶³Eduard Schweizer, Jesus, trans. by David E. Green, London, 1968, p. 48.

⁶⁴Ibid. Schweizer also believes that this tradition is probably true because Jesus' resurrection could hardly have been proclaimed in Jerusalem if people still knew of a tomb containing Jesus' body. Ibid.

tradition to fit their own apologetic needs; or, to consider the possibility that several other women beside Mary Magdalene were present at the tomb on the first Easter, and each Evangelist took the freedom to mention the name/s he did either out of loyalty to a particular tradition which he chose from among others or from personal preference. In either case, it is doubtful whether the women themselves would have been called upon for apologetic purposes since the supporting testimony of women would certainly be suspect in such an important matter.⁶⁵ It seems more likely that there were several women at the tomb but that Mary Magdalene was the leading figure, hence her priority in all the accounts. Perhaps all that should be generally agreed upon at this point is that the empty tomb was discovered not by the "twelve," but by the women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee. The story then was first reported by the women and subsequently confirmed by the disciples (Peter according to Lk. 24: 12; but Peter and the "Beloved Disciple" according to Jn. 20:3-ff.).

Adding to the above discussion, Bultmann has argued that the discrepancies in the empty-tomb stories, especially in the Gospel of Mark on which the other Evangelists depend, indicate the lateness of that tradition.⁶⁶ He cites as evidence for this the cumbersome repetition of the women's names in Mark 16:1 (cf. 15:40, 47).⁶⁷ This

⁶⁵Bode, *op. cit.*, p. 169. Bode sees the development of the tradition in the addition of the angelic appearance at the tomb because the Jewish polemic against the resurrection of Jesus needed more support than that of a report by some women. He concludes that the angelic appearances are separate from and secondary to the historical nucleus of the empty-tomb narrative. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-70.

⁶⁶Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, *op. cit.*, p. 285n.

⁶⁷*Ibid.* J. Jeremias agrees with Bultmann at this point. See his *New Testament Theology*, trans. by John Bowden, London, 1971, I, 304. O'Collins believes that the repetition of the names is a clear

repetition of the women's names, however, does not necessarily indicate a new or secondary tradition being introduced into Mark's gospel. In 15:40 those women accompanying Mary Magdalene were Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In 15:47 it was only Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses who saw the burial. In 16:1, however, Mark says that all three of the women (15:40) went to anoint Jesus' body rather than just the two women who saw Jesus buried the Friday before. That Mary the mother of James and Joses is mentioned as only the mother of Joses in 15:47 but of James in 16:1 probably should not be a cause for concern since it is clear from 15:40 that the same Mary is in mind in both places. Perhaps the names are reintroduced in 16:1 because Salome, who did not see the burial (15:47), joined the two Marys for the subsequent anointing; and Mark simply wanted to express her devotion along with the other two women. This is admittedly a rather rigid following of the text and not necessarily a correct understanding of it, but it may be that it will open up other possibilities for understanding the duplication of names.

3. The problem of opening the tomb. Bultmann believes that a good indication of the secondary nature of the empty-tomb tradition in Mark 16:1-8--on which the other Evangelists rely--is the failure of the women to consider ahead of time how they would open the tomb.⁶⁸

indication of an editorial hand involved in Mark 16:1-8 in an effort to link the passion and burial of Jesus to the Resurrection narratives. He also adds 16:7 as another attempt to do the same thing. Cf. O'Collins, op. cit., p. 21. See his p. 40 for those elements in 16:1-8 which he believes are late additions to the passage.

⁶⁸Cf. 16:3. Bultmann, loc. cit.

It is only in Mark 16:3 that the women are worried about the opening of the tomb for the purpose of anointing the body of Jesus. Matthew only says that the women went to see the sepulchre where Jesus was placed, and there is no mention of spices (28:1).⁶⁹ Luke states simply that the women brought spices to the tomb, and they found the stone rolled away from before it (24:2). John, like Matthew and Luke, has no mention of the difficulty of moving a stone.

This problem does not seem to this writer at least to be a very great one. Both Mark 15:46 and Matthew 27:60 indicate that Joseph of Arimathea himself closed the tomb by rolling the stone against it. Add to this the fact that since one man closed the tomb, it would be possible for one man to have opened it. In John 20:15 when Jesus appears to Mary, she supposes him to be a gardener! Is it possible that there would be someone in the vicinity of the tomb upon whom the women could have prevailed to open the tomb? It may well be that the anxious hope of the women to visit the tomb was strong enough that they would begin their journey to the tomb in hopes of finding someone to open it for them. Also, it must be remembered that these women were from Galilee (Luke 23:55) and not from Jerusalem. Because of this fact they probably had few friends in Jerusalem on whom they could call for help except for the disciples who had fled and forsaken Jesus in his hour of trial. In such circumstances it is quite possible that the only chance of receiving help would have been somewhere in the neighborhood of the tomb itself either from a gardener or from someone else in that area. Mark 16:3 cer-

⁶⁹C. F. Evans notes that according to Matthew the guard had sealed the tomb, and the women therefore came only to visit the tomb, not to anoint the body. C. F. Evans, Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, p. 82.

tainly leads one to allow for this possibility.

4. The opening of the tomb. Along with the above question, there is the problem concerning the opening of the tomb. Mark 16:4 says that the tombstone was already rolled back when the women arrived. This is followed by Luke who says that the women "found the stone rolled away from the tomb" (24:2) and John who claims that Mary "saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb" (20:1). These three reports claim that the tomb was already opened when the women arrived; but Matthew, on the other hand, reports that the women--and the guards! (28:4)--actually saw an "angel of the Lord" descend from heaven and roll back the stone (28:2). Added to this, there is "a great earthquake" (v. 2) which precedes that event. How can such strong differences between Matthew and the other Evangelists be accounted for? It may be possible to understand Matthew's description of the opening of the tomb as an attempt to include the guard as a witness to the resurrection of Jesus thereby strengthening the women's testimony to this event. That certainly appears to be a part of the plan of Matthew in dispelling the Jewish polemic against the Resurrection (28:4, 11-15), but perhaps a closer look at Matthew's narrative will find another motive for his description.

Perhaps the key to understanding Matthew's intentions can be found in his reference to the "great earthquake." In the Old Testament the earthquake is a mark of Yahweh's presence for revelation (Exodus 19:18) or for destructive judgment (Isa. 29:6).⁷⁰ Elsewhere in the New Testament earthquakes are among the catastrophic phenomena

⁷⁰L. E. Toombs, "Earthquake," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, New York, 1962, II, 4.

of the last days.⁷¹ It seems possible therefore that the earthquake, not found in the other Gospels, is meant to emphasize the revelatory and apocalyptic nature of this event. The description of the "angel of the Lord" (28:2-3) and the results of his activity (v. 4) are almost direct parallels--aside from the earthquake--to Daniel 10:5-7. This can be seen (1) in the "appearance like lightning" (v. 3, cf. Dan. 10:6) and (2) the fear of those present (v. 4, cf. Dan. 10:7) and (3) the admonition not to fear (v. 5, cf. Dan. 10:12). Daniel 10:2-21 is clearly an apocalyptic passage speaking about the activity of Yahweh in the oncoming history. Added to the suggestion about the earthquake phenomenon, it should be recalled that at the death of Jesus all of the Synoptic Evangelists record accompanying physical (miraculous) phenomena. All three mention the tearing of the temple curtain (Mk. 15:38; Matt. 27:51; Lk. 23:45), but along with this Matthew mentions an earthquake (27:51, 54) and the unusual resurrection of the bodies of many saints (v. 52). This latter phenomenon is probably intended to indicate that an eschatological event is taking place since earthquakes and the resurrection were both viewed as eschatological or apocalyptic phenomena. Matthew is evidently confident that he is viewing the dawn of a new age.⁷²

It is therefore this writer's view that Matthew is not primarily trying to set forth some supernatural phenomena for apologetic purposes; but he is trying to indicate the significance of the events he is describing, i.e., with the death and resurrection of Jesus a new age has begun. This understanding of the dawning of a new age then has dominated Matthew's empty-tomb story as well as his appear-

⁷¹Ibid. See especially Mt. 24:7; Mk. 13:8; Lk. 21:11.

⁷²Jeremias agrees on this point. Cf. op. cit., pp. 309-10.

ance stories.⁷³

5. The women entering the tomb. In the Synoptic Gospels the women all enter the tomb when they see that it is open.⁷⁴ John, however, states strangely that Mary Magdalene saw that the stone had been rolled away and then ran to tell Peter and the "other disciple" (presumably John) that the body was missing (v. 2). At this point she only sees the stone rolled away but can tell the disciples that the body had been taken. Not until verse 11 does Mary stoop to look into the tomb, and this is after Peter and the "other disciple" have entered (v. 3-10). As was noted previously, Bultmann believes that verse 2 is simply a connective joining two different stories. The story of Mary goes from verse 1 to verse 11 with another story about Peter and the "other disciple" sandwiched in the middle of the story about Mary.⁷⁵

It may well be that the difference in John's story and the Synoptics lies in John's knowledge of the priority of Peter. John, seeking to preserve the priority of Peter in his narrative, prevents Mary from entering the tomb until after Peter had done so. This is supported by the unusual waiting of the "beloved disciple" until after Peter had entered the tomb (v. 5, 8). R. H. Fuller prefers this interpretation of John's motive here.⁷⁶ On the other hand,

⁷³J. Jeremias points out that the passage in 28:18-20 is not unlike Daniel 7:13-15 which speaks of the kingdom and dominion of the Son of Man. Jeremias concludes from Matt. 28:18 that Matthew means "... that the prophecy that the Son of man would be enthroned as ruler of the world was fulfilled in the resurrection." *Ibid.*, p. 310.

⁷⁴Cf. Mk. 16:4 and Matt. 28:6. This is also understood by the angel's invitation to "Come, see where he lay," Lk. 24:3.

⁷⁵See Chapter IV, pp. 136-8. ⁷⁶Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

Mary's entering the tomb at her first visit could have been assumed by John without his expressly stating so because otherwise it makes Mary's comment about the missing body (v. 2) difficult to follow. How else would she know without entering? But, it may be asked, if she went in or had even stopped to look in at her first visit to the tomb (v. 1), then why did she not see the grave clothes (vv. 6-7)?⁷⁷

6. The purchasing of the spices. Because this problem has been discussed to some degree already in the previous section, only the differences between Mark and Luke will be mentioned here.⁷⁸ Neither Matthew nor John mention the women bringing spices to the tomb of Jesus. John mentions that the spices and ointments were prepared by Nicodemus but not by Mary. Both Luke and Mark refer to the women bringing spices to the tomb, but there is a difference in the time when the spices were obtained. Mark 16:1-2 states that after the Sabbath was past (διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββατοῦ) the women bought

⁷⁷It may also be asked why she did not see the grave clothes when she looked into the tomb in v. 11. She sees only the angels who fail to communicate anything significant to her. Cf. Brown, op. cit., p. 995. Bultmann may be correct in recognizing two different empty-tomb stories in John 20:1-18, and it is possible that the many difficulties in this passage can be understood better by recognizing the rough composite nature of this section of John's Resurrection narrative. R. Brown has correctly noted that these problems are: (a) Mary comes to the tomb alone in v. 1 but speaks as "we" in v. 2; (b) she states that the body was stolen (v. 2), but failed to look into the tomb until v. 11; (c) the frequent duplication in the story about Peter and the Beloved Disciple, e.g., two "to" phrases in v. 2, a repetition in what was seen in v. 5 and v. 6; (d) the belief of the Beloved Disciple has no effect on Mary or anyone else (v. 19); (e) it is not clear how or when Mary returned to the tomb in v. 11; (f) why does Mary see angels and not grave clothes in v. 12? (g) v. 13 reveals nothing about the fate of Jesus or anything else for that matter; (h) Mary is said to have turned to Jesus two times (vv. 14, 16). Cf. Brown, loc. cit.

⁷⁸See related discussion in the section on the burial story, pp. 238 ff.

spices, and quite early on the first day of the week they came to the tomb. It is possible that the spices were purchased on Saturday night according to this passage, but it is also a possibility that this purchase was made early on Sunday morning. It appears from verse 2, however, that a subsequent time, i.e., "early on the first day of the week," is being indicated. Luke, on the other hand, says that the women prepared the spices (on Friday), then rested on the Sabbath (23:56); then on the first day of the week they took the spices they had prepared with them to the tomb (24:1). The difference between Mark and Luke on the time of the purchase (Mk. 16:1) or preparation of the spices (Lk. 23:56; 24:1), then, is at least one full day.

The difficulty in resolving this time element could be overcome if one is prepared to say that Luke did not intend his mentioning of the women resting on the Sabbath to be understood as occurring after the preparation of the spices. If this is correct, then the rest on the Sabbath (23:56b) is to be understood as a quick afterthought, i.e., the women returned and later prepared spices though they did rest on the Sabbath, and (καί) then went to the tomb on the first day of the week (24:1). This line of reasoning, however, is very brittle and requires a number of "if's," especially regarding the separation of a day between the return of the women and their preparation of the spices.

7. The angels in the empty-tomb stories. There are several differences between the four Evangelists regarding the angels attending the empty tomb. First, how many angels were involved? Mark says

quite clearly that there was only one angel (16:5),⁷⁹ and Matthew agrees here (28:2). Luke, however, says that there were "two men . . . in dazzling apparel" who appeared to the women. John again is in agreement with Luke at this point (Jn. 20:12). Why then is there this difference on the number of the attending angels between Mark and Matthew on the one hand and Luke and John on the other?

It is interesting to note, as has van Daalen, that the identical words "Behold two men" are found in the story of the transfiguration in Luke 9:30 (but not in Mark 9:4) and in the Ascension story of Acts 1:10.⁸⁰ He rightly asks whether Luke is trying to connect Moses and Elijah (9:30) with these three events (the transfiguration, the Resurrection and the Ascension).⁸¹ Or, it may be asked, is this use of the number two a tradition that Luke used which is similar to the one used by John (20:12)? As was mentioned above, such parallels between Luke and John are not necessarily insignifi-

⁷⁹νεανίσκον is the word used, literally "a young man;" but the description of him leaves little doubt that an angel was intended. He is wearing a white robe, the dress generally used to indicate the glory of the wearer in the New Testament. Cf. Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29 compare 24:4; John 20:12; Acts 1:10. In Revelation 3:18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 14; and especially 19:8, 14, white clothing refers to various inhabitants of heaven. It is clear therefore that Mark is referring to an angel since angelic apparel is spoken of as white robes elsewhere in the New Testament. Also, in Luke 24:4 the two men "in dazzling apparel" are understood to be angels in 24:23. There is little doubt then that Mark understood the young man "dressed in a white robe" (16:5) to be an angel. Along with this it would be difficult to explain why the women were amazed (v. 5b) if the "young man" were in fact only a young man.

⁸⁰D. H. van Daalen, The Real Resurrection, London, 1972, p. 22.

⁸¹Ibid. Another interesting parallel is that in each of these references the two men "stood by," i.e., in Luke 9:30 they stood by Jesus (the word is the perfect participle of συνίστημι), in Luke 24:4 they stood by the women (the word is the Aor. Ind. of ἐφίστημι), and in Acts 1:10 they stood by the apostles (the word is the pluperfect of παρίστημι). Such similarities should not be easily dismissed as unintentional or insignificant trivia.

cant.⁸² Another possibility is that Luke usually has two witnesses at major events, e.g., Simon and Anna (2:25-28); Herod and Pilate witnessing the innocence of Jesus (23:1-25); two men attending the transfiguration (9:30-34); "two men" attending the empty tomb (24:4); two men on the road to Emmaus (24:13-32); the sending out of the disciples two by two (10:1), passim.⁸³ Elsewhere Luke uses the number forty (Lk. 4:2; Acts 1:3) in a special way to indicate something perhaps beyond the number itself.⁸⁴ The number two is one of the most commonly used numbers in the Gospels; and, along with the number seven, it is one of the most popular numbers in the New Testament. Luke (Luke-Acts) refers to it more than any other writer in the New Testament though it is quite common in the Gospels. It is difficult to find a consistent use of the number, but it is found frequently in Jesus' parables or in pronouncements.

William Lillie may be correct when he suggests that originally only one angel was mentioned but that Luke and John, perhaps following a tradition also followed in the Ascension of Isaiah where two angels (Michael and Gabriel) are identified, may have introduced the second angel because the Jews were accustomed to the idea of angels participating in a resurrection.⁸⁵

⁸²See above p. 241.

⁸³Van Daalen, loc. cit. As noted previously, Bultmann be-153 believes that the number "two," a common number in ancient folklore, indicates the basic character of the writing in this passage. See Chapter IV, p. 128.

⁸⁴Hugh Anderson suggests that there may be a "theological" reason behind the apparent discrepancy between the length of Jesus' appearances on earth. Cf. "The Easter Witness of the Evangelists," The New Testament in Historical and Contemporary Perspective, ed. by Hugh Anderson and William Barclay, Oxford, 1965, p. 49. See discussion below on Ascension, Chapter VII, pp. 324-5.

⁸⁵Lillie, loc. cit. See Appendix for a lengthy quote from

Whether there is some special significance to be attributed to the number two is a matter of debate; and certainly if there is, one can find no consensus of opinion on what the number refers to. However, the frequency of the number in Luke may be a strong indication of some "theological" significance intended which is not presented in Mark or Matthew, but also found in John. For this writer, the parallels between Luke and John here and elsewhere are significant and possibly point to a source earlier than that used by Mark. Both Luke and John mention two angels, but Luke attributes to them an interpretive role while John, on the other hand, does not give them any essential role in the empty-tomb story except that the angels, by their presence, may indicate the significance of the Resurrection. What is also strange is the lack of surprise or amazement in Mary when she encountered the angels (20:12-13). In Matthew there is fear and joy expressed (28:5); in Mark there is amazement and fear (16:6, 8); and in Luke there is fear (24:5); but in John, Mary has neither amazement nor fear at the sight of the angels (20:12-14)! Evidently John is willing to subdue the importance of the angels, but their presence in his source/s was probably too strong or dominant for him to dismiss them altogether. At any rate, it is quite possible that Luke and John both depend upon a common tradition for their information on the number of angels present at the tomb.

Secondly, there is the difference in the location of the angels. Mark's angel was inside sitting on "the right side" evidently of where Jesus' body was placed (16:5). Matthew's angel descended from heaven, rolled back the stone from before the tomb, and sat down outside on the stone (28:2). Luke's angels are inside

Kirsop Lake in support of this view.

and standing (24:4), but John's angels are inside sitting "where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the foot" (20:12).

Thirdly, the initial comments of the angels have interesting parallels. In Mark the angel tells the women, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified:" (16:6). Matthew is quite similar, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified" (28:5). Luke's angels, on the other hand, say nothing to dispel the fear of the women (24:5); but they ask, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (24:5). John's angels simply ask Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?" (20:13); and the question about seeking Jesus, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, is left for Jesus himself to ask. Jesus combines the same question of the angels with a question similar to the angelic statement in the Synoptics and asks, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" (20:15). Only in John does the initial revelation about the emptiness of the tomb come from Jesus himself. In the Synoptics the angel/s all state the message that Jesus is risen, i.e., "He has risen; he is not here" (Mk. 16:6); "He is not here; for he has risen, as he said" (Matt. 28:6); "He is not here, but he has been raised" (ἡγέρθη, Lk. 24:6).⁸⁶

Fourthly, the further message of the angels shows several interesting discrepancies. In Mark the angel bids the women to look

⁸⁶This writer rejects the Westcott-Hort theory of "Western non-interpolations" preserved in D. The evidence of p⁷⁵, δ^{BC3KL} is too strong of a witness to be rejected on a theory that a longer text always indicates the perverted text. The recognized superiority of the Neutral text cannot be dismissed in favor of a universally acknowledged perverted text (D) because that text is shorter at points. Cf. Kurt Aland's convincing arguments against Westcott and Hort's view of the "Western non-interpolations" in his "The Significance of the Papyri for Progress in New Testament Research," The Bible in Modern Scholarship, ed. by J. Philip Hyatt, Nashville, 1965, p. 334; and Bruce M. Metzger's comment in his A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, London, 1971, pp. 183-4, 191-3.

at the location where Jesus was placed (v. 6).⁸⁷ In Matthew 28:6 the angel bids the women to "Come and see the place where he lay," indicating they had not yet entered the tomb, but were invited to do so. Along with this, Mark's angel then tells the women to tell the disciples and Peter that "he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you" (16:7). Matthew's version of the angelic command is somewhat more expanded than Mark's. His angel tells the women to tell the disciples "that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo I have told you" (28:7). Matthew has strangely omitted Peter from the angelic command and, added to the statement that Jesus had risen from the dead, he has changed the "Lo, he has told you" in Mark to "Lo, I have told you." Luke's angels do not give a command to go to Galilee or even to tell the disciples, but call instead upon the women to remember Jesus' words "while he was still in Galilee" (v. 6) concerning his crucifixion and subsequent resurrection "on the third day" (v. 7, cf. I Cor. 15:4).⁸⁸ John likewise does not tell of any command to go to Galilee; but he reports that Jesus, after telling about his ascension, commands Mary to report his ascension to the disciples (20:17).⁸⁹

⁸⁷Whether it is possible to conclude from this that the angel wanted the women to see Jesus' grave clothes is an argument from silence, but is there something special about the place where he was placed apart from the fact that he is missing? The angel has already told the women that Jesus was not there but risen; however, if the women were in the tomb (v. 5), they could see he was not there; so then why the call to look at the place? The text here does not warrant such speculation; and though it may be possible, this cannot be asserted dogmatically.

⁸⁸The differences here may be due in part to the "theological" motivation of Luke to make Jerusalem the center of the new Christian missionary endeavors of the Church. See the discussion in Chapter VII, pp. 291-306.

⁸⁹This difficult passage will be discussed more completely

The problems indicated here concerning the angels at the tomb, when taken together, are certainly very serious and should not be minimized. But what can be made of such discrepancies? What did the angels say? What was each writer trying to convey when he introduced the angel/s? Matthew evidently wanted to point to the eschatological nature of the events he was trying to describe, i.e., the future was about to arrive!⁹⁰ Mark and Luke employ the angel/s to interpret for the women the significance of the empty tomb. John, however, may be the key to understanding all of the passages. He evidently employs the angels to show the importance of the resurrection of Jesus, though strangely Mary does not understand this until Jesus speaks to her. In John the angels do not advance the message of the risen Lord as they do in the other Gospels.

It is concluded, therefore, that the probable significance of the angels in the empty-tomb tradition is that they point to the importance of the empty tomb, which in itself only caused bewilderment due to its ambiguity, but that their presence at the tomb in the Easter traditions was intended to point to the great significance of the event of the Resurrection itself.⁹¹

8. The response of the women to the angelic message. In the Synoptic Gospels this is quite varied. Mark 16:8 says the women fled

under the section on the appearance stories. Matthew has a similar combination of the empty-tomb stories with an appearance of Jesus (Matt. 28:9-10).

⁹⁰See above discussion, pp. 262-4.

⁹¹The early Church's addition of the angelic presence at the empty tomb has already been discussed in Chapter IV, pp. 142-6. There it was concluded that there were in fact no angels at the tomb in the earliest form of that tradition. Their significance in the story was to point to the eschatological nature of the resurrection of Jesus.

from the tomb and "said nothing to anyone for they were afraid."⁹² Matthew, however, states that the women departed from the tomb "with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples" (28:8). Luke says nothing about the joy of the women, but simply says--and almost blandly--that the women had "remembered his words" (vs. 8), and returning from the tomb "they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest" (24:9-10).⁹³

9. The response of the disciples to the message of the women. Mark, of course, says nothing since his gospel ended abruptly without telling of the women's report to the disciples; but Matthew says that the women went to tell the disciples (28:11) and that the disciples responded to their message by going to Galilee (28:16). It is clear that Matthew intends for his readers to understand that the disciples believed the women. Luke, however, says that the apostles did not believe the women's report because "these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (v. 11).⁹⁴ Matthew does not indicate any lack of belief in the women's reports, but Luke reserves faith for a subsequent time when Jesus appears to the disci-

⁹²Comments have already been made against the view that this ending of the Gospel was Mark's originally intended conclusion. See Chapter IV, pp. 121-4.

⁹³Luke 24:10 almost seems like a second thought on the part of Luke to remember all the women who were at the tomb. It is difficult to know whether this is an attempt by Luke to make his gospel correspond to the other Evangelists, especially because he adds "the other women with them" to show that others were present at the tomb. Luke obviously feels free to depart from the Markan tradition--if he was acquainted with this part of it, and he adds some of the names of the women from Galilee (23:55). Perhaps it is significant that Luke introduces the title "apostle" here in his Resurrection narrative.

⁹⁴Even allowing for the authenticity of 24:12, which this writer does, there still is the lack of belief in the women's report. The end of v. 12 says Peter "went home wondering at what had happened."

ples and breaks bread with them (24:30-34). John says nothing about the disciples' response to Mary's report of Jesus' appearance (20:18); he only mentions the response of the two disciples when they heard of the empty tomb, i.e., they went to check out the tomb (20:2-4).

10. The problem of the grave clothes. In John 20:3-10 Peter and the Beloved Disciple, upon receiving news from Mary Magdalene that "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb . . ." (v. 2), ran to the tomb evidently to check out her report. Verses 4 and 5 state that both disciples ran toward the tomb but that the "other disciple" reached the tomb first and having looked inside--without entering--saw the grave clothes ("linen cloths"). Peter came then and entered the tomb and also saw the clothes lying in their (evidently) peculiar place. This is followed by the "other disciple" entering the tomb and responding by faith to what he saw.⁹⁵ However, the faith of the Beloved Disciple here does not fit with the following statement, ". . . for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead" (v. 9). Also, if faith was reached at the tomb by the "other disciple,"⁹⁶ why is it that this faith was not shared with Mary who is left standing at the tomb weeping (v. 11) or, for that matter, with the rest of the disciples (vv. 19-23)? It is important here to refer to the similar passage in Luke 24:12.⁹⁷ Luke does not

⁹⁵Note the close relationship between εἶδεν and ἐπίστευσεν.

⁹⁶Bultmann argues that εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν (v. 8) refers to both disciples. He reasons that if the writer intended only one of the disciples to come to faith, then the two disciples would have been set over against one another and it would have been expressly stated that Peter had not believed. Cf. Bultmann, The Gospel of John, loc. cit. However, as will be shown, is this not precisely what the writer is trying to do? The Beloved Disciple and not Peter is the hero of the passage.

⁹⁷As was stated elsewhere, this writer does not accept the

mention the "other disciple" accompanying Peter to the tomb, but he does say that Peter saw the grave clothes lying by themselves, "and he went home wondering at what happened." If Luke's account is right in saying there was only one disciple (Peter), and if he is correct in saying that only confusion or wondering resulted from this visit, then John's story would be at odds with the Lukan passage only in his mentioning of the "other disciple" and in that disciple's coming to faith. If Luke's version of the story is correct, there is no conflict between the believing in verse 8 and no mentioning of it to Mary (v. 11) or the other disciples (vv. 19-ff.). In fact, if the act of believing by the "other disciple" (v. 8) is not original to the tradition in John about the grave clothes (common to both Luke and John), then the οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾔδεισαν of verse 9 becomes more intelligible (and more in harmony with Luke); and the reason why the Beloved Disciple did not share his faith with the other disciples (vv. 19-ff.). is obvious: in the original story no one believed on seeing the grave clothes. The failure of the two disciples to understand--at this point (οὐδέπω)--the Scripture about the resurrection of Christ (v. 9) would then be somewhat parallel to the conclusion of Luke's version of the same story, i.e., πρὸς ἑαυτὸν θαυμάζων τὸ γεγονός (24:12). If this assertion is correct, then John's narrative would be more consistent with itself and with Luke.

Also, if the above is correct, the question is then raised,

Westcott-Hort theory on the "Western non-interpolations" or the superiority of the generally inferior Western text in some nine instances (i.e., Matt. 27:49; Lk. 22:19b-20; 24:3, 6, 12, 36, 40, 51, and 52) over the consistently superior Neutral text. Along with X and B and other manuscripts, these so-called interpolations are supported by the very important p⁷⁵. Also, Metzger points out that v. 12 is the natural antecedent to 24:24, a verse well supported by all manuscripts. Cf. Metzger, op. cit., p. 184.

and quite properly so, why does John introduce the Beloved Disciple in this passage at all? At first glance it appears as though he is trying to shape a well-known tradition--the story of the grave clothes--into a vehicle for expressing perhaps that which the other Gospels express through the angels, i.e., the meaning of the empty tomb. But if this is so, then it is a puzzle why Peter and Mary do not come to the same conclusion as the Beloved Disciple. Raymond Brown suggests that John has tried to introduce here not only the significance of the empty tomb, but also a very sensitive relation to Jesus through love which by contrast Peter did not have.⁹⁸ He believes that John is not necessarily trying to detract from Peter, but "... to exalt the status of the Beloved Disciple."⁹⁹ Brown discredits the view that John is trying to point to the blessedness of the Beloved Disciple because he believed without seeing (contrast 20:29). He agrees with Oscar Cullmann who says that because the Beloved Disciple "saw and believed" (20:8), he could not be one of those in verse 29 "who have not seen and yet have believed."¹⁰⁰ Brown says that John is making a special hero of the Beloved Disciple who is closely connected to Jesus through the primacy of love. He concludes that the writer of John was, in the story of the race to the tomb and in the "other disciple's" faith, "simply telling us that the disciple who was bound closest to Jesus in love was the quickest to look for him and the first to believe in him."¹⁰¹

Both John's motive for interpreting the empty tomb and his

⁹⁸Brown, op. cit., pp. 1004-5. ⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 1005-6. Cf. Oscar Cullmann, Salvation in History, trans. by Sidney G. Sowers, London, 1967, p. 273.

¹⁰¹Brown, op. cit., p. 1007.

pointing to the faith of the Beloved Disciple, therefore, are probably later additions to the earlier tradition about the grave clothes which is seen more clearly in Luke 24:12. Luke 24:24 indicates that "Some of those who were with us . . ." went to the tomb which is different from the implication of 24:12 that only Peter went to the tomb. This can possibly be resolved by pointing to Luke's desire to emphasize the priority of Peter (cf. 24:34). It was not necessarily his intention to rule out the possibility of others being present at the tomb. It is also quite possible that in Luke 24:12 another disciple may have been with Peter on his visit to the tomb and perhaps even more than two as Luke 24:24 suggests. William Reiser, who believes that Luke 24:12, 24 depends on an earlier form of the Johannine tradition of the disciples at the tomb, says that it is possible that Luke knew of Peter's visit to the tomb and that he also knew about the accompanying "Beloved Disciple;" but he ". . . would not have considered him worth mentioning for it would not have suited his purpose."¹⁰²

At any rate, it is probable that the double witness to the grave clothes indicates that there was an early tradition about this story which was available both to Luke and John. John introduced a new element into the story--the faith of the Beloved Disciple--in order to express both the meaning of the empty tomb, i.e., that Jesus was raised from the dead, and to exalt the status of the Beloved Disciple. If the Beloved Disciple's act of believing is deleted from the passage, there will be fewer problems in understanding the continuing sorrow of Mary (v. 11) and the failure of the Beloved Disci-

¹⁰² William E. Reiser, "The Case of the Tidy Tomb," The Heythrop Journal, 14:51, January, 1973.

ple to tell the others of his discovery.

11. The guard at the tomb. The story of the guard at tomb in Matthew 27:62-66 and 28:11-15 has been widely accepted as a later legendary apologetic in the Gospel tradition even among many conservative scholars. Because of the clear apologetic nature of the story as well as the apocalyptic coloring throughout the passage¹⁰³ and the fact that no other Gospel mentions the presence of soldiers at the tomb, most scholars consider this story a later development in the Resurrection tradition.¹⁰⁴

Although not a few scholars reject the story of the guard at the tomb as an authentic part of the earliest Easter tradition, a number of them point to this story to substantiate the fact of the empty tomb. R. H. Fuller, who agrees with Bultmann that the story is an "apologetic legend," believes that it helps to establish the Jewish understanding of the Resurrection, i.e., that it was bodily.¹⁰⁵ He writes:

The use of the Jewish polemic is of considerable importance, for it shows that "resurrection" to the Jewish mind naturally suggested resurrection from the grave. It was to the Christian kerygma that Christ "had been raised from the dead" that they /the Jews/ replied by the allegation that the empty tomb was a fraud.¹⁰⁶

Fuller also believes that this story supports the earliest belief of the Church concerning the time of the resurrection of Jesus, that it was on the "third day" (I Cor. 15:4) or "after three days" (Matt.

¹⁰³Cf. the discussion above on pp. 262-ff.

¹⁰⁴G. M. Lee's argument for the authenticity of this story is unconvincing and appears to be based on supposition. Even he himself finds it necessary to rearrange the events in the story in order to justify his understanding of it. Cf. G. M. Lee, "The Guard at the Tomb," Theology, 72:169-75, April, 1969.

¹⁰⁵Fuller, op. cit., p. 73. ¹⁰⁶Ibid.

27:63-64).¹⁰⁷ Van Daalen believes that this narrative establishes the fact of the empty tomb. He says:

But whether or not the story of the guard is historical, it points to a controversy in which both parties agreed that the tomb was empty. How it came to be empty, that was the question.¹⁰⁸

Robert Grant illustrates Matthew's response to the controversy between the Jews and the Christians regarding the tomb in the form of a dialogue:

Christians: the tomb was empty.

Jews: the disciples stole the body.

Christians: the tomb was sealed and guarded.

Jews: the guards were asleep.

Christians: the guards were paid to say they were asleep.¹⁰⁹

Grant agrees that apologetic interests have helped to shape the story of this debate, but also he believes with van Daalen that the story points to the fact of the empty tomb.¹¹⁰ Bode agrees with this saying that the Jewish polemic did not deny the empty tomb, but rather it tried to explain it away.¹¹¹

The reference to the knowledge of the Jewish authorities concerning Jesus' prediction of his resurrection has led C. F. Evans to endorse further the legendary nature of the passage.¹¹² Evans says the reference to Jesus having claimed "After three days I shall rise," (27:63) cannot be related to any public statement of Jesus, but ". . . reflects again the later Christian preaching of the resurrection."¹¹³ R. H. Fuller agrees with this when he contends:

¹⁰⁷Ibid. ¹⁰⁸Van Daalen, op. cit., pp. 20-1.

¹⁰⁹Robert M. Grant, A Historical Introduction to the New Testament, London, 1963, p. 370.

¹¹⁰van Daalen, op. cit., pp. 20-1.

¹¹¹Bode, op. cit., p. 174; so also Lillie, op. cit., p. 130.

¹¹²Evans, op. cit., pp. 85-6. ¹¹³Ibid., p. 85.

Since there is every reason to suppose that predictions of his own resurrection are post-Easter additions to the Jesus tradition, this is another indication of the post-Easter origin of the pericope.¹¹⁴

Willi Marxsen makes the point that this story contradicts itself in at least two places. First, when the guards experience the opening of the tomb (28:2-4) they return to tell this story to the chief priest. Why would they report to the Jewish authorities if they were Romans?¹¹⁵ The second problem has to do with the obvious inner conflict of the report the chief priests told the guard to pass along to the people (28:13). Marxsen rightly raises the question against the story, "How can anyone say what happened while he was asleep?"¹¹⁶ Such "inner contradictions" in the story lead Marxsen and others to conclude that the story of the guard at the tomb has no basis in fact or at least could not have occurred as it is written.¹¹⁷

In conclusion, this writer would not want to argue for the authenticity of this tradition as a whole, but only conclude that it does set forth in the Jewish polemic two important elements of the early Easter tradition, namely that both the enemies of Christianity and the Church recognized that the tomb of Jesus was empty, the only disagreement being how it came to be empty, and that the nature of the Resurrection was understood in the early Church to be from the grave.

¹¹⁴Fuller, op. cit., pp. 72-3.

¹¹⁵Marxsen, op. cit., p. 46. This objection does not pose a problem to this writer since 27:62-66 states that Pilate offered the guard to the chief priests and Pharisees. Why wouldn't they report to the Jewish authorities since Pilate assigned this guard to them?

¹¹⁶Ibid. ¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 46-7.

Further Comment on the Empty-Tomb Tradition

The preceding section has focused on a number of difficult problems in the empty-tomb stories, but often omitted in such a discussion are the strong consistencies and their importance. These will be noted here with a brief comment.

First of all, all of the Evangelists say that the tomb in which Jesus' body was placed was empty early on the first day of the week and that this was testified to by several witnesses. In all four Gospels, this fact is witnessed first of all by women,¹¹⁸ and in Luke 24:12, 24 and John 20:3-9 this is seen by two of Jesus' disciples. Although Matthew and Mark do not state that the disciples examined the tomb, they do not deny it either. If the disciples were in Jerusalem when they received the women's report, it would not be out of the ordinary for them to check the tomb especially in view of the disturbing report given to them by the women.

Secondly, in each of the Gospels there is an angelic presence at the site of the tomb on Easter morning. Although the message of the angel/s varies according to each Evangelist,¹¹⁹ their presence clearly indicates the importance of the empty tomb and events surrounding it.¹²⁰ Perhaps the Evangelists all want their readers to understand the eschatological nature of the events which occurred at the tomb. At any rate, since no Evangelist believed that the empty

¹¹⁸This writer accepts the possibility of there being more than one woman present at the tomb in John's narrative because of the οἰδαμεν in 20:2, but this is not dogmatically asserted.

¹¹⁹In all three Synoptic Gospels, the angels interpret the significance of the tomb, i.e., that Jesus is risen; but the angels in John only ask a question, and the explanation of the significance of the empty tomb is given by the risen Lord Himself (Jn. 20:11-18, cf. also Mt. 28:8-10).

¹²⁰See above discussion pp. 270-2.

tomb in and of itself could do anything but evoke wonder and doubt, each writer felt the need to interpret the significance of the tomb either by angelic reports (Mark and Luke) or the appearance of Jesus (John) or both of these (Matthew). Bode, who does not wish to call into question the existence of angels, omits all angelic appearances from the historical nucleus of the empty-tomb tradition.¹²¹ For him the women neither experienced the appearance of an angel nor received a heavenly message at the tomb primarily because he finds kerygmatic and redactional elements in the angelic message.¹²² He asks:

How could the angel have spoken in the kerygmatic language of the primitive church according to Mark, with the authority of God as his messenger to announce the predicted resurrection according to Matthew, with the themes of Lukan theology according to the third gospel and without any message according to John?¹²³

He reasons that the angelic appearance and message can be dismissed from the historical nucleus of the empty-tomb tradition because they constitute a biblically acceptable literary motif for presenting a divinely authoritative message. Also, he believes that the exclusion of the angel from the empty-tomb tradition gives a better insight into the tradition and its development.¹²⁴ Bode believes that the women did come to the tomb early on the first day of the week and found the tomb empty; but for the women the tomb remained ambiguous, indeed for everyone, until its significance was later established by the proclamation of the Resurrection and a reference to the appearance of Jesus to his disciples.¹²⁵ He does not accept the account of the disciples going to the tomb (Luke 24: 12, 24; John 20:3-9), and believes rather that the women kept silent about the tomb until the Resurrection proclamation began to be

¹²¹Bode, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-70. ¹²²*Ibid.*, p. 178. ¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴*Ibid.* ¹²⁵*Ibid.*

preached.¹²⁶ Bultmann is in basic agreement when he says that the empty-tomb tradition existed separately from the appearance stories, having an independent origin;¹²⁷ although unlike Bode, Bultmann believes the tomb tradition itself was a later apologetic legend. Bode says the virtual silence about the empty tomb in all of the appearance stories (except in the Emmaus account) indicates an independent origin of both traditions.¹²⁸

Ulrich Wilckens agrees with Bode adding that the diaspora Jews at an early time in Jerusalem came to believe in Jesus through contact with the primitive Christian community. For these Jews the resurrection of Jesus was central; but they were unacquainted with the developing tradition which originated in Jerusalem at a later time, e.g., the story of the empty tomb.¹²⁹ This group of Christians, influenced by Hellenism, set forth a "cosmic christology" which ". . . included in its assertions scarcely a word about the ministry and teaching of the historical Jesus himself."¹³⁰ It was this growing tradition in the Church, which had a powerful influence, that prepared the ground for varieties of gnosticism in early Christianity; and consequently the reverse tendency shown in the later Resurrection stories in which the pre-resurrection identity of Jesus is seen in his corporeal appearances, such as in Luke 24:36, ff.¹³¹

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, op. cit., p. 287.

¹²⁸Bode, op. cit., p. 182.

¹²⁹Ulrich Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, ed. by C. F. D. Moule, trans. by Dorothea M. Barton and R. A. Wilson, London, 1968, pp. 73-4.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 74. ¹³¹Ibid., pp. 74-5.

It seems, however, that this line of reasoning is based almost completely on an argument from silence. Because such stories as the empty-tomb tradition are not found in the Epistles, but are in the Gospels, this is little proof that the tradition was unknown to the writers of the epistles, especially Paul. Wilckens' view presupposes that during Paul's visits to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18; 2:1, ff.) he did not come into contact with any pre-Synoptic traditions concerning Jesus; or if he did, it did not interest him.¹³²

Although it is admitted that the empty-tomb tradition is not found in any of the appearance stories save in the Emmaus account, the independence of this tradition from the appearance stories would, if Bode is correct, only be short lived. This writer can find no reasonable argument against the visit of the disciples to the tomb (so Luke and John); and indeed, since all four Gospels say the tomb was discovered early on the first day of the week, the disciples were probably still in Jerusalem at the time--they would have had to leave Jerusalem on the Sabbath otherwise; and being Galileans along with the women who discovered the tomb, they would probably have heard about the empty tomb from the women. Not only do Luke 24:12, 24 and John 20:2, ff. give this impression but also in all of the Gospel reports the angels (or Jesus) command the women to tell the disciples --who were obviously still in Jerusalem at the time--about the tomb, i.e., "he [Jesus] is not here."¹³³ In every Gospel account the

¹³²This point was argued in Chapter IV, Section 3. See also Gerhard Delling, "The Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus for Faith in Jesus Christ," The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, ed. by C. F. D. Moule, trans. by Dorothea M. Barton and R. A. Wilson, London, 1968, pp. 81-2 who believes Paul probably was aware of the empty-tomb tradition as well as the corporeality of the resurrection of Jesus. Note his arguments on pp. 83-8.

¹³³"Here" clearly refers to the tomb, cf. Mk. 16:6; Matt.

women/Mary tell the disciples about their experience at the tomb;¹³⁴ consequently the tomb story could not have been separated long, if at all, from the proclamation of the Resurrection; and the disciples therefore probably already knew of the tomb when Jesus had appeared to them. Also, Bultmann's and Bode's argument for the separation of the empty-tomb stories from the appearance stories is not as convincing as might first appear because the New Testament does not make the tomb an object of faith. Why should the tomb be recalled in the appearance stories? The purpose of these appearances was evidently to assure the disciples of the reality of Jesus' aliveness and to give to them their missionary task. In his proclamation of the resurrection of Christ, Paul and the other New Testament writers had no need to give a narration of a tomb since that was not the basis of Easter faith; but in the Gospels there is a keen interest on the part of the Evangelists to tell the story of Jesus. It could well be that the apologetic needs of the Christian community at the time of the writing of the Gospels called for the assurance of the corporeality of the Resurrection appearances or even for further support for the event itself; but at what place could the Evangelists more appropriately include an explanation for that which was common knowledge at this time, i.e., the empty tomb,¹³⁵ than in a narrative on the

the Bible where angels are introduced, it is frequently a sign that

28:6. This is even seen in John 20:13 as well as Lk. 24:3.

¹³⁴Mk. 16:7 is a command for the women to tell the disciples even though the present ending of the Gospel does not indicate that they complied with the angelic command. It should also be noted that this command, found in all four Gospels, would be redundant if the disciples had already fled or departed Jerusalem. The four-fold testimony to tell the disciples at the least implies their presence in Jerusalem at the time of the discovery of the tomb.

¹³⁵It is also this writer's view that the empty-tomb tradition was common knowledge among Christians and Jews alike very early. Whether or not all Jews accepted the notion of a bodily resurrection,

life and significance of Jesus? Since there are only four Gospels and all include this story, the argument for its early existence is certainly more enhanced especially in light of the obvious free handling of the traditions known by the Evangelists. When they felt free to draw upon or omit numerous items in the Easter tradition, why would all of them include the story of the tomb unless it had occupied a dominant place in their traditions?¹³⁶

Now, regarding the difference in the angels' message, in the Synoptic Gospels the message which is common to all of them is that Jesus is alive, his body is not in the grave. In the story of Mary at the tomb, the angels become the occasion for Mary's statement that the body was gone (Jn. 20:12-13), then the meaning of the absence of Jesus' body is given by Jesus himself (Jn. 20:14-17). Matthew apparently confirms the message of the angel with an appearance of Jesus to the women (28:9-10), but in all of these stories the message is the same: Jesus' body is not in the tomb, he has risen from the dead, and his aliveness is asserted. It might also be added that the angelic message to the women at the tomb, contrary to Bode, was a heavenly revelation which they conveyed to the disciples and which was later entered into the Church's proclamation, though it must be admitted that there is little reason for saying this. C. H. Dodd says that in the Bible where angels are introduced, it is frequently a sign that ". . . a truth is being conveyed which is beyond the reach of the

it is quite clear that the early Church did since all surviving narratives of the early Church, i.e., the Evangelists and even the apocryphal gospels, refer to the tomb. This will be discussed more in the next chapter when the subject of the Jewish understanding of resurrection in the time of Jesus will be explored.

¹³⁶For further arguments in favor of the empty-tomb tradition see Chapter IV, pp. 144-58.

senses, a 'revelation,'"¹³⁷ Concerning the angelic visit at the empty tomb he adds:

. . . what the women saw [i.e., the empty tomb] brought only perplexity; then by a leap beyond the evidence of the senses, they knew what it meant. But it still awaited verification from later experience.¹³⁸

The variation in the angel's message in the Synoptics is an evidence for an early dating of that tradition if it is given that traditions do tend to expand with time as they are passed along. John's different role for the angels--if there is a significant one--is indeed difficult to understand. Perhaps it could be said that John tries to hold onto the story of the presence of the angels at the tomb; but he is trying to say that the first appearance of Jesus, contrary to the other traditions on the priority of Peter, was to the women (or Mary).¹³⁹ If this is correct, it could be argued that Mark and Luke substitute an appearance of Jesus with an appearance by the angels to preserve the established priority of Peter. All of this is, of course, speculation; and the reason why John has no angelic message as such is not clear. But since his angels add little or nothing to the story of the Resurrection, it is a wonder why John chose to include them at all unless the tradition was so strong in their favor that he felt it necessary to include them.

It should be admitted here that the empty-tomb tradition in its present form does allow for Resurrection faith apart from having received an appearance from the risen Lord. This is clear especially

¹³⁷C. H. Dodd, The Founder of Christianity, London, 1971, p. 165.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹See also Matt. 28:9-10 where Matthew, the only gospel which does not mention Peter, is apparently trying to establish this point.

in Matthew 28:8, Luke 24:8-11, and John 20:8. Mark also allows for this possibility (16:6-7), but in his account the women do not believe, at least up to the point where his Gospel breaks off. In Matthew the disciples evidently believe the women's report and set off for Galilee (28:16). In the rest of the New Testament--apart from the Gospels--Easter faith for the disciples is a result of meeting the risen Lord and not because of events at the empty tomb. Therefore, since the rest of the New Testament testimony regarding Easter faith does not speak of any act of believing before the appearances, it must remain a distinct possibility that the angelic appearances, together with their message, are a late addition to the empty-tomb stories. The empty tomb at first was probably ambiguous and only caused confusion (so Mark 16:8; Luke 24:12, 24; John 20:1-2), but later after the appearances it became a signpost indicating to the early Christians that the eschatological act of God in Christ took place in history. It may also have pointed them to the nature of the Resurrection, *i.e.*, it was bodily. Later the empty-tomb story itself became a vehicle for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus.

It seems certain, then, that the emptiness of the tomb was established very early both in the Christian and non-Christian communities and that this fact in itself was quite ambiguous and caused numerous interpretations, *e.g.*, the Jews said the disciples had taken the body and Mary thought someone else had taken the body. It is possible that because of this the emphasis in the narratives shifts from the ambiguity of the tomb to the appearances of Jesus for confirmation of the fact of the Resurrection. The vacant tomb would never stand on its own but would help corroborate the conclusion drawn from the appearances.

Therefore, in concluding this section, this writer finds the following to be the nucleus of the empty-tomb tradition. Early on the first day of the week the women came to the tomb where Jesus was buried and found it empty. They may have been given an interpretation of the significance of the empty tomb by some form of revelation (angelic?), though there is reason for doubt here. After their discovery they conveyed their find to the disciples, some of whom investigated the tomb to check the women's report.

Jerusalem, the last supper, Gethsemane, the arrest of Jesus, his hearing before the Sanhedrin, Peter's denial, the Barabbas story, condemnation by Pilate, the crucifixion, the burial, and even the empty tomb itself.¹ However, when it comes to the appearances, the only cohesion in the Gospels seems to be the order, i.e., that the appearances follow the discovery of the empty tomb. Beyond that similarity, there is little else which follows in all the Gospel appearance stories. C. H. Dodd has noted that there is a basic pattern in the appearance stories, i.e., the situation (generally the disciples' state of gloom and despair), the appearance of Jesus, his greeting, the recognition, and the word of command.² But even though a pattern can be found in the appearances, there are striking differences in the persons involved, the circumstances, and the locations of the appearances, etc. Of course, some of the subject differences have to do with the persons involved in the appearances and the location of the appearances, but there are many more. This fact shows in part that the Gospels were never intended to be harmonized.

¹Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. by A. Richardt, New York, 1955, p. 24.

²Cf. C. H. Dodd in his "Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. by B. E. Verey, Oxford, 1957, pp. 4-5.

THE SAME CONTINUED--THE APPEARANCE STORIES

I. A DISCUSSION OF SOME BASIC QUESTIONS

In spite of all of the problems of harmony in the empty-tomb traditions, one can still find a good deal of coherence within the rest of the story of the passion narratives, i.e., the entry into Jerusalem, the last supper, Gethsemane, the arrest of Jesus, his hearing before the Sanhedrin, Peter's denial, the Barabbas story, condemnation by Pilate, the crucifixion, the burial, and even the empty tomb itself.¹ However, when it comes to the appearances, the only cohesion in the Gospels seems to be the order, i.e., that the appearances follow the discovery of the empty tomb. Beyond that similarity, there is little else which follows in all the Gospel appearance stories. C. H. Dodd has noted that there is a basic pattern in the appearance stories, i.e., the situation (generally the disciples' state of gloom and unbelief), the appearance of Jesus, his greeting, the recognition, and the word of command.² But even though a pattern can be found in the appearances, there are striking differences in the persons involved, the circumstances, and the locations of the appearances, etc. Of course, some of the biggest differences have to do with the persons included in the appearances and the location of the appearances, but there are many more. This fact shows in part that the Gospels were never intended to be harmonized

¹Cf. Joachim Jeremias, Eucharistic Words of Jesus, trans. by A. Ehrhardt, New York, 1955, p. 300.

²Cf. C. H. Dodd in his "Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," Studies in the Gospels, ed. by D. E. Nineham, Oxford, 1957, pp. 9-35.

by their writers, but also it points to the reason for the inability of scholars to provide satisfactory explanations for the development of the Easter tradition. To deny that the problems exist does not appear to be honest, and to harmonize them does not appear to be possible. This, however, should not lead one to a neglect of the Resurrection narratives, but rather to seek to clarify their message. The following discussion includes, for this writer at least, some of the most difficult problems to be found in the Easter stories. This list is not complete in any sense, but it includes the most troublesome problems in the appearance stories. After examining the narratives, an attempt will be made to discover some cohesion in the Easter traditions. Following that some additional comments about the Resurrection narratives will be made.

The Location of the Appearances

One of the chief difficulties in reconstructing the events of the first Easter is the problem of locating the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Mark indicates that the appearances which would be forth coming would take place in Galilee (Mk. 14:28; 16:7).³

Matthew, evidently following Mark's leading, places the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Galilee (28:16-ff.) except for the appearance of Jesus to the women ("Mary Magdalene and the other Mary") in Jerusalem (28:8-10). The close parallels between Mark 14:28, 16:7, and Matthew 28:7 argue strongly for Matthew's dependence upon Mark at

³Bultmann believes that both passages in Mark, 14:28 and 16:7, are footnotes put by Mark into the narrative which he took from an old tradition telling of the disciples' flight to Galilee. Since the story of the disciples flight was dispensed with by Mark, Mark found it "... necessary to have the disciples artificially dispatched to Galilee in order to achieve congruity with the old Easter tradition" Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. by John Marsh, Oxford, 1968, pp. 285-6.

this point. On the other hand, neither Luke nor John refer to any appearances of Jesus in Galilee. For them the appearances all took place in and around Jerusalem.⁴

How can these two strongly differing traditions be brought together? At the moment there appear to be three possibilities: (1) that the appearances of Jesus took place both in Galilee and in Jerusalem; (2) that the appearances took place solely in Galilee; and (3) that the appearances took place solely in and around Jerusalem. Most scholars have attempted to reconcile the geographical differences, but others have emphasized that the appearances occurred in but one of the two locations. What seems to be more popular presently is to ask why there were two locations mentioned in the Easter traditions and what theological significance there may be connected with either place.⁵ Gerald O'Collins says that since the 1930's (Lohmeyer) Mark's references to Galilee have not always been taken "geographically" because the term seems to denote "the place of preaching" or even the "land of the Gentiles," indicating the world-

⁴I.e., on the road to Emmaus, in Jerusalem, and in Bethany (Lk. 24:13-ff., 33-ff., 50-ff.). John mentions Jerusalem only. It must be recalled again that the Galilean appearances of Jesus in John 21 cannot be considered a part of the original Gospel (cf. Chapter IV, pp. 129-30); and just as Mk. 16:9-20 is a late addition to Mark, John 21 must be thought of along the same lines, i.e., an attempt to harmonize existing traditions and possibly to answer questions which were later raised against the Easter faith.

⁵Cf. Ernst Lohmeyer, Galiläa und Jerusalem, Göttingen, 1956, cited by Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, New York, 1964, pp. 197-8. Not a few scholars today give support to Lohmeyer's early contention that there were theological reasons for the references to Galilee and Jerusalem although many would not agree on what those theological differences were. He held that early Christianity had a twofold origin stemming from both Galilee, where the Church held to a "Son of Man Christology" and believed Galilee to be the land of eschatological fulfillment, and from Jerusalem, where the Church held to a "Messiah Christology," cf. Lohmeyer, loc. cit.

wide mission of the Church.⁶ If this view is correct and Mark does not intend Galilee to be taken in a geographical sense, then one would probably accept Jerusalem as the actual place of the appearances. On the other hand, if Mark is earlier and Bultmann's view is accepted--i.e., that Mark deleted the oral tradition of the disciples' flight to Galilee and only included the appearance stories there (in the original unmutated ending of his Gospel), then the location of the appearances was probably Galilee. Bultmann counters the view that the disciples remained in Jerusalem and argues:

. . . I have no doubt that the old tradition told of their flight to Galilee, and placed the appearances of the risen Lord there. But if the flight into Galilee be dispensed with, it is necessary to have the disciples artificially dispatched to Galilee in order to achieve congruity with the old Easter Tradition, and this actually happened in the editing of Mk. 16:7 and 14:28.⁷

O'Collins believes that even though Mark may use the term Galilee with some theological value in mind, it is probably best to follow Mark rather than Luke and place the appearances in Galilee.⁸ He thinks it is more likely that Luke altered Mark's text for heavy theological reasons than the other way around.

Willi Marxsen, on the other hand, takes Mark 16:7 (and 14:28), not as a reference to a Resurrection appearance, but as a reference to the parousia of Christ which Mark expected to occur soon in Galilee. He argues that in the Gospels and Paul ὡφθῆναι and not ὁψεσθῆναι ("you will see") is used for the Resurrection appearances, and the ὁψεσθῆναι in Mark therefore is a reference not to a Resurrection appearance but to the parousia of Christ.⁹ Marxsen, along with R.

⁶Gerald O'Collins, The Easter Jesus, London, 1973, p. 36.

⁷Bultmann, loc. cit. ⁸O'Collins, op. cit., p. 37.

⁹Willi Marxsen, Mark the Evangelist, Nashville, 1969, pp.

H. Lightfoot and Wilhelm Michaelis, follows Ernst Lohmeyer's contention that Galilee is the land of theological or eschatological fulfillment and believes that Mark was pointing to the coming parousia, not simply to a Resurrection appearance.¹⁰

R. H. Fuller perhaps sets forth the most telling objections against Marxsen's understanding of Mark 16:7 (and 14:28) when he points out that Paul and John use $\delta\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ for a Resurrection appearance (I Cor. 9:1; John 20:18, 25, 29) and that Matthew undoubtedly understood Mark 16:7 as a Resurrection appearance (Matt. 28:7, 10, 16-20).¹¹ The decisive argument, however, as Fuller is quick to note, is the fact that Mark names Peter and the other disciples indicating clearly a reference to the two appearances listed in I Corinthians 15:5.¹² He writes:

If Mark 16:7 were pointing forward to the parousia it is hard to see why Peter should be singled out for special mention. But if it points to resurrection appearances, the reason for the mention of Peter is obvious.¹³

In light of the above, the question must be raised again: Where did the appearances of Christ take place, in Galilee or in Jerusalem, or in both places? C. F. D. Moule has proposed a solution which can bring the two different traditions together. He asks whether it is possible to hold that the appearances took place first

83-92.

¹⁰Cf. also Willi Marxsen, The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, trans. by Margaret Kohl, London, 1970, pp. 141-ff., 163-4.

¹¹Reginald H. Fuller, The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives, London, 1972, p. 63.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., pp. 63-4. O'Collins adds to this some six other objections to Marxsen's view, though they do not appear to be as important as the ones set forth by Fuller. Cf. O'Collins, op. cit., pp. 37-8.

in Jerusalem and then Galilee.¹⁴ Moule suggests that the location of the Resurrection appearances might be understood in terms of the festival pilgrimages. He says that the disciples of Jesus were all Galileans and consequently were in Judaea only as pilgrims for the Passover Festival just as Jesus had been.¹⁵ Within a week of the end of the Passover they would naturally return to Galilee. During that week some of the disciples could have seen Jesus in Jerusalem and then later in Galilee.¹⁶ Accepting that the appearances were spread over a longer period of time, e.g., for some forty or fifty days, Moule believes it is quite possible that the disciples returned to Jerusalem for the "next Pilgrim Feast, Pentecost," and there Jesus appeared to them again in Jerusalem.¹⁷ Moule admits this is a rather rigid interpretation of the narratives, but he believes this way he can make some sense of Mark 16:7 and also of Luke's admonition from the risen Christ to the disciples to remain in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). He explains:

Such literalism may seem absurd; but it seems to make sense of the Marcan "he goes before you into Galilee" (16:7)--it would mean, when you return home you will find him already there--and of the injunction in Luke-Acts not to leave Jerusalem after Pentecost (Luke 24:48, Acts 1:4)--it would mean, this time, do not return to Galilee, as you did after Passover.¹⁸

C. F. D. Moule's proposal has been criticized by several scholars not only because his solution is a rather brittle interpretation of some difficult passages, but also because it cannot be

¹⁴C. F. D. Moule, ed., The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, London, 1968, pp. 4-ff.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 4-5. ¹⁶Ibid. ¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid. Cf. also C. F. D. Moule, "The Post-Resurrection Appearances in the Light of Festival Pilgrimages," New Testament Studies, 4:58-ff., October, 1957.

supported by the Resurrection narratives and further it raises the difficult problem of separating Luke 24:36-53 (presumably between vv. 43 and 44) in order to allow for a Galilean appearance before the command of 24:48 to remain in Jerusalem.¹⁹ Apart from this criticism, Hugh Anderson rightly concludes that Moule has, with his interpretation, not come to grips with the fact that Mark and Matthew have opted so strongly for Galilee but Luke and John for Jerusalem.²⁰

The same objections could be said for Lilly's somewhat traditional solution to the problem which is based on the refusal of the disciples to believe the women's late report of the empty tomb and of the command from the angel to go to Galilee.²¹ He says Jesus' intention at first was for the disciples to leave the hostile atmosphere of Jerusalem for the more tranquil territory of Galilee where he would reveal himself to them and give his final commission, but:

. . . the holy women delayed to report the direction to the Apostles, and when finally the message did reach them, they remained incredulous, labeled the report contemptuously "idle tales." The only way, at least the most effective way, to overcome this incredulity was for Jesus to appear to the Apostles directly, establish faith in their minds as to the reality of His resurrection and prepare them for the final and more important appearances in Galilee.²²

Although this view could commend itself to some, it is rejected here because Lilly fails to account for Luke's and John's rather clear preference for Jerusalem as the location of all of the

¹⁹C. F. Evans gives other objections to Moule's proposal, cf. C. F. Evans, Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, pp. 112-3.

²⁰Anderson, op. cit., p. 39.

²¹Joseph L. Lilly, "Alleged Discrepancies in the Gospel Accounts of the Resurrection," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 2:103-4, 1940.

²²Ibid.

appearances, especially Luke (24:49) who may have been aware of the Markan tradition (note 24:6).

Another attempt at harmonizing the location of the appearances has been set forth by C. F. Evans' translation of προάγειν in Mark 14:28 and 16:7 which is based on Mark's earlier use of this term in 10:32. The normal translation of this term is "to precede," but Evans believes it means "to lead."²³ If Evans is right, then Jesus led his disciples from Jerusalem to Galilee, thereby appearing in both Jerusalem (first), then all the way to Galilee. But this translation, however well suited for Mark 10:32 or 14:28, is ill-suited for 16:7. In 16:7 an angel clearly says ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, referring of course to Galilee. This statement would be highly inappropriate if Jesus were to appear in Jerusalem to lead the disciples to Galilee.²⁴

Willi Marxsen, on the other hand, takes the differences in the Gospels on the location of the appearances as an indication that each Evangelist aimed only at showing one important truth, i.e., that the activity of Jesus continues on in spite of his death, and it is the activity of the same Jesus who was active on the earth.²⁵ The Evangelists' arrangement and selection of material for their Gospels was their own as well as the sequence in which this material was

²³Evans, op. cit., p. 81; C. F. Evans, "I Will Go Before You into Galilee," Journal of Theological Studies, N. S., 5:3-18, 1954.

²⁴R. H. Fuller also rejects Evans' translation of προάγειν and prefers the meaning "to precede" or "going ahead." He says Mark intends the words "He is not here" (16:6) to indicate that the Risen One is in heaven and his appearances will take place in Galilee after the disciples arrive. Cf. Fuller, op. cit., p. 61.

²⁵Marxsen, op. cit., pp. 76-8.

placed. It was determined chiefly by the period during which they wrote, the readers for whom they wrote, and the varying theological problems with which each had to deal separately.²⁶ The details of the Easter tradition were basically unimportant, but what each was concerned to say is that:

. . . the cause of Jesus goes on beyond Good Friday--in a miraculous way, it must be added. And the fact that it goes on is always due to a new emergence and intervention of Jesus, to a new commission.²⁷

Marxsen, however, adds to this that the mode of the resurrection of Jesus was neither an article of faith nor a part of a ". . . universal Christian conviction."²⁸ On the contrary, however, in every tradition or Resurrection narrative the Resurrection always means Jesus was raised from the dead and was seen (or appeared).²⁹ Marxsen concludes, "It was possible to be convinced of the continuing activity of Jesus without having to express in uniform terms the exact way in which this continuing activity was achieved."³⁰ However, Marxsen has chosen to base his conclusions upon the differences in the narratives rather than upon their agreements. When the mode of the Resurrection is in view, all the Evangelists speak of an empty tomb; and Paul's language of I Corinthians 15 does not exclude an empty tomb. Some scholars believe that the knowledge of an empty tomb is implied in the ἐτάφη of I Corinthians 15:4.³¹ Still others believe that an

²⁶Ibid., p. 77. ²⁷Ibid., p. 78. ²⁸Ibid.

²⁹In Mark's Gospel this can be concluded from the angelic comment, "He has risen, he is not here" (16:6), especially in light of the empty-tomb setting. The reference to the place where the disciples will see Jesus (16:7) is also in line with all other Resurrection traditions including Paul's in I Cor. 15.

³⁰Marxsen, loc. cit

³¹Walter Kunneth, The Theology of the Resurrection, London, 1965, p. 94.

empty tomb was not mentioned by Paul only because it was correctly not an object of faith but simply pointed to the nature of the resurrection of Jesus.³² The Evangelists and Paul, however, do not simply say that the "activity" or "cause" of Jesus continued beyond Good Friday, but that Jesus himself, who was put to death, has survived the grave and is now alive and has revealed himself to his disciples. The nature of the event was not lost in obscurity, but was from the grave. This is clear even in Paul where the sequence ἐτάφη, ἐγήγερται (I Cor. 15:3-5) at least indicates that the resurrection of Jesus was from the grave.

James McLeman offers yet another view of the differences in the Gospels with regard to the location of the appearances. Rather than opt for one theological motif (Galilee as the base for missionary expansion or eschatological fulfillment) over another (Jerusalem as the birthplace and headquarters of the Church), he accepts both as true.³³ He believes, however, the phenomenon at the center of the Resurrection narratives is not an "... objective event but a conviction arrived at by normal process and that this explains the patent discrepancies of the traditions."³⁴ The conviction probably first occurred in Jerusalem since the disciples fled from there when Jesus was arrested and crucified, but later the disciples brought it with them back to Jerusalem.³⁵ For McLeman, there were no "physical type" events to initiate the birth of Christianity; but, much like

³²Cf. George Eldon Ladd, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Christian Faith and Modern Theology, ed. by Carl F. H. Henry, New York, 1964, pp. 276-7.

³³James McLeman, The Birth of the Christian Faith, Edinburgh, 1962, pp. 29-ff.

³⁴Ibid., p. 41. ³⁵Ibid., pp. 30-ff.

Willi Marxsen, he believes that the conviction of the continuing cause of Jesus was at the heart of the later concretizing efforts of the Evangelists who produced the Gospels.³⁶ He claims that the subject of the Resurrection was not born out of experience nor deduced from it, but from ". . . the proleptic reach of faith."³⁷ This means, ". . . the doctrine of the resurrection is in the first instance the creation of the human spirit in its relation to God and the future."³⁸ This thought was clothed in the language which was available and appropriate at the time which was in harmony with the prevailing concept of God, man, and the world. The essence of the thought, however, was that nothing could destroy the unity between God and man. McLeman says that it is in this context that the New Testament conviction of the resurrection of Jesus ought to be understood.³⁹ He writes:

The conclusion therefore that this phenomenon at the centre of the post-crucifixion experience of the disciples is a conviction rather than an event, is continuous with what we have found in our survey of the history of the resurrection idea. Historical necessity wove the garment. The Christian conviction survived, but in a grosser form and at the expense of the pure leap of faith which is its source and origin.⁴⁰

Wolfgang Pannenberg is probably correct in saying that the majority of modern critics are in "extensive agreement" that the basic appearances of Jesus took place in Galilee.⁴¹ One of his argu-

³⁶Ibid., pp. 46-50. ³⁷Ibid., p. 46.

³⁸Ibid., underscoring mine. ³⁹Ibid., pp. 46-7.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 47-8. One cannot help but compare this particular approach to that of Bultmann described in Chapters II, III, and IV. McLeman, like Bultmann, is committed to a view of history which is closed to the notion that God could be the sole cause of an effect in history. Ibid., p. 41.

⁴¹Wolfgang Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, trans. by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, London, 1970, p. 104.

ments for accepting Galilee as the location of the appearances is the original independence of the empty tomb and appearance traditions from each other. There seems to be no knowledge of the empty-tomb tradition in the appearance stories,⁴² and this suggests to him their original separate existence. After the appearances in Galilee, Pannenberg says the disciples returned to Jerusalem and upon returning heard of the empty tomb. Because it agreed with their encounter with the Risen Jesus, they incorporated the story of the empty tomb into the Resurrection tradition.⁴³

This view, of course, presumes that the disciples left Jerusalem before the discovery of the tomb and returned to Galilee. Pannenberg, following Hans Grass, supports this view by asking why, if the disciples remained in Jerusalem, are there no references in the Passion narratives to their witness of the crucifixion?⁴⁴ Again he asks, if the disciples were in Jerusalem, why did they not take part in the burial of Jesus? The answer to these questions is in part found in the fleeing of the disciples at Jesus' arrest. They were afraid for themselves (John 20:19), but they were also--no doubt--quite confused and discouraged having witnessed the arrest of the One whom they believed would usher in the eschatological kingdom of God. Also, if the disciples had already departed for Galilee, what would be the purpose of the women telling the disciples to go to Galilee (Mk. 16:7; Mt. 28:7, 10)? All four Evangelists tell of the command to the women (by the angels or Jesus) to report their findings at the tomb to the disciples who were in Jerusalem. Such

⁴²Except Luke 24:24 of course.

⁴³Pannenberg, op. cit., pp. 104-5. ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 105.

multiple attestation suggests to this writer at least that the disciples did not depart from Jerusalem without a knowledge of the empty tomb. Along with that, this writer is impressed with the evidence for the genuineness of the story of the disciples' visit to the tomb in Luke 24:12, 24 and John 20:3-8,⁴⁵ even though John overlays the tradition with another motive.⁴⁶

Mark 16:7 presupposes of course the disciples' return to Galilee,⁴⁷ but the fact that the women are to report their discovery of the tomb to them before their departure (all four Gospels agree on this) also shows that the journey to Galilee was after the Sabbath. How soon they departed for Galilee and how quickly they returned to Jerusalem, however, cannot be established with any preciseness. Acts 2 indicates that the disciples at least returned to Jerusalem by the time of the Pentecost festival.

If, on the other hand, Luke and John are followed, it is not easy to fit in a Galilean appearance of Jesus before the Jerusalem appearances--Luke 24:13 and John 20:19 seem to forbid this--or even afterwards since everything for Luke concludes at the end of the first day with a command to remain in Jerusalem (24:49). It is possible that further Galilean appearances could be "fitted in" at the end of John's story about Thomas (20:24-29)--does 20:30 make room for such?--; however, they would seem to serve no purpose. For John the Resurrection appearances of Jesus show that Jesus was exalted and glorified, and in them Jesus gives the Holy Spirit as well as proof of his exaltation. It is difficult to see what any further appear-

⁴⁵See above Chapter VI, pp. 143-4.

⁴⁶See above Chapter VI, p. 144n.

⁴⁷Pannenberg, loc. cit.

ances in Galilee would have added to this. If it is true that Jesus had originally intended that the disciples should go to Galilee, but because of their unbelief he had to appear to them in Jerusalem in order to get them to Galilee,⁴⁸ it is not clear what more would have been revealed in Galilee which was not revealed in Jerusalem in the appearances referred to by Luke and John.⁴⁹

The difficulty one faces in bringing these two traditions together certainly enhances the notion that more than a geographical problem is involved in the Evangelists' choice for the location of the appearances. It is difficult to imagine that nothing other than geography presented itself to Luke in his choice of Jerusalem and his neglect of Galilee, especially in light of 24:6 where he evidently shows his rejection of Galilean appearance traditions or at least an awareness of that tradition.

In viewing this survey of possible explanations for the differences in the various traditions, few proposals have commended themselves. Each one has its own peculiar problems. In every case a harmony seems impossible without doing further damage to other parts of the Resurrection traditions. Should one accept one tradition as more reliable than another, say Mark instead of Luke?

Certainly the fact that Mark was written earlier than Luke and was used elsewhere by him⁵⁰ would lend itself to this idea. But what was Luke's purpose in accepting and advocating the tradition which which was also followed by John and subsequently altered in the

⁴⁸Lilly, loc. cit.

⁴⁹Matthew's missionary charge (28:19) in Galilee is not unlike Luke's missionary charge (24:45-48) in Jerusalem.

⁵⁰There is little evidence that Luke made use of Mark's Resurrection narrative. 24:6 is not in itself conclusive.

appendix (ch. 21)? Theological motives seem prevalent in both cases, i.e., Galilee as the home for the expansion of the mission to the Gentiles, and Jerusalem as the birthplace and home of the Church; but are these correct motives which caused the Evangelists to opt for one location over another? Is it not possible that not enough information is known to be able to decide? Surely as the accounts now stand there is a discrepancy, but is there a missing factor which could bring the two traditions together? In their accounts, do Luke and John reject the possibility that any appearances took place in Galilee? On the other hand, do Mark and Matthew intend to exclude any appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem?⁵¹ Thus far no satisfying solutions have presented themselves to this writer.⁵² Perhaps it would be better to remain open to a view not yet advanced which would do justice to the idea of theological motives existing in (or leading to) the choice of locations by each of the Evangelists, but also one which will allow for appearances at both places.⁵³ I Corinthians 15:5-8 speaks of appearances to Peter, then to the twelve, and then to "over five hundred brethren," then to James, then to all of the Apostles, and finally to Paul. The appearance to the "five hundred brethren" may be an indication of some appearances in Galilee

⁵¹Matthew 28:9-10, of course, records an appearance of Jesus to the women in Jerusalem, but not to the disciples.

⁵²Hans von Campenhausen's six-point chronology of events in which he tries to harmonize the existing traditions has not unfolded as clearly as one would hope. In it von Campenhausen omits too many of the troublesome details, e.g., the appearance of Jesus to the women, the despair of the disciples after the arrest of Jesus, and the exclusiveness of the Jerusalem tradition in Luke. Cf. Hans von Campenhausen, Tradition and Life in the Church, trans. by A. V. Littledale, London, 1968, pp. 85-6.

⁵³This, of course, may still be a possibility even though a harmony does not seem possible at present. Cf. Robert M. Grant, A Historical Introduction to the New Testament, London, 1963, p. 370.

where Jesus accomplished most of his ministry.⁵⁴ The same could be said of the appearance of James (and possibly "all of the apostles") since James (also of Nazareth) was not one of the original "twelve" apostles and possibly had need of an appearance from Jesus to initiate his conversion.⁵⁵ Because the thrust of Jesus' ministry was in this area, it is quite likely that some of the appearances took place there;⁵⁶ but on the other hand Matthew (28:9-10), Luke, and John mention appearances in Jerusalem. Since the "Mother Church--if that is an appropriate term--was in Jerusalem and was recognized as such in Acts (passim) and in Paul (Gal. 2), and since the death and resurrection of Jesus occurred there as well as the earliest Christian missionary activity, then perhaps Luke and John chose to emphasize the Jerusalem appearances in their Gospels. On the other hand, it may be that since Jesus' preaching ministry was primarily in Galilee and the majority of his followers were most likely in that area in the early stages of the Church's growth, Mark and Matthew consequently emphasized Galilee.

What is needed in this attempted harmony, of course, is a "missing link" which can bring the two traditions together and yet appreciate their differences without diminishing the individual

⁵⁴Von Campenhausen says there was no place in Jerusalem available to five hundred witnesses since Jesus appeared only to disciples. Von Campenhausen, op. cit., pp. 47-8.

⁵⁵S. H. Hooke places the appearance to James and "all the apostles" in Jerusalem, but his purpose for doing so is not clear. Cf. S. H. Hooke, The Resurrection of Christ as History and Experience, London, 1967, pp. 38, 46.

⁵⁶A large gathering of five hundred followers of Jesus (I Cor. 15:6) is more likely to have occurred in Galilee than in Jerusalem because of Jesus' concentrating most of his ministry in that area and because the atmosphere would have been less hostile there than in Jerusalem. The Pharisees, who were among Jesus' strongest opponents in Jerusalem, had very little influence in the Galilean

message of either. Presently, aside from theological motives, no one seems to have found that magical "link;" and what theological motives may have been present are matters of debate with no consensus emerging. The location of the appearances of Jesus therefore continues to be the major hindrance in any reconstruction of the events of Easter.

To Whom did Jesus First Appear?

Matthew says that Jesus appeared first to the women (Matt. 28:9-10), and John indicates that Jesus' first appearance was to Mary alone (Jn. 20:14-18). Mark and Luke, however, have no such appearance of Jesus; there is only an appearance of the interpreting angel(s) to the women, and they are told that Jesus will appear in Galilee to his disciples and to Peter (Mk. 16:7; Lk. 24:4-7). Whether Mark intends that Peter will be the last to see Jesus in Galilee (i.e., "tell his disciples and Peter," 16:7) cannot be determined; but Peter is singled out for special mention. Whether this means that he will be the first to see Jesus is not disclosed (or prohibited) either. Luke makes no mention of an appearance of Jesus to the women (he does have two angels appear to them) but records an appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who, following that occasion, ^{were by} told "the eleven" that Jesus had risen and "appeared to Simon" (Lk. 24:34). Just when the appearance to Peter occurred is not answered in Luke, but evidently it was before the appearance to the two disciples; and the implication is that such an appearance was mentioned to them by the risen Jesus though the text does not explicitly say so. Luke here seems to be following the Pauline tradition (I Cor. 15:5) or the same one known to Paul. All four Gospels men-

region.

tion the angelic appearance to the women; but they differ on who received the first appearance, i.e., Mark says the disciples and then Peter; Matthew says the women; John says it was Mary Magdalene; Luke says Peter.

Perhaps the solution to the problem might be in the brevity of Mark's Gospel, i.e., if Mark had finished his Gospel he may have included a story of an appearance to the women. In both Matthew (28:9-10) and in John (20:11-ff.) the appearance of Jesus to the women comes immediately after the angelic appearance and as the women (or Mary) are walking away from the empty tomb. Whether Mark would have had an appearance of Jesus at this point if he had finished his Gospel is mere conjecture; but since Matthew, who elsewhere followed Mark rather closely, had such an appearance and John, who followed another tradition (Jerusalem), agreed with him, it does not seem too far fetched to suggest such a notion.

But if this suggestion is true, why does Luke fail to mention the appearance of Jesus to the women? What purpose would he have in omitting this first appearance if it had indeed occurred? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that Luke is trying to set forth the best defense he could for his Gospel, and the mention of women in his story may have weakened his argument.⁵⁷ Perhaps this is also the reason that Paul does not mention the appearance to the women in his list in I Corinthians 15. By Jewish law women were not deemed competent to testify,⁵⁸ and this may have figured in Luke's omission of the appearance to the women in his presentation of the case for

⁵⁷Note: In Acts 1:3 he speaks of "many proofs" (πολλοὶς τεκμηρίοις) for the resurrection of Jesus.

⁵⁸See, e.g., von Campenhausen, op. cit., p. 75.

Christianity.

On the other hand, von Campenhausen believes that there were no appearances to the women on the "third day," and he appeals to the silence of Mark and Luke for support.⁵⁹ However, owing to the problem of the credibility of the women among the Jews at that time, it does not seem likely that such stories of appearances to women would have been allowed into the Resurrection traditions of John and Matthew if there were no element of truth in them. Unless they actually happened, what motive could be advanced for the inclusion of the appearances to the women? It seems more reasonable to believe that such stories would be excluded rather than deliberately put into the Gospel traditions. Also, because of Peter's prominence in the formation of the early Church, special priority in the traditions would be given to him over the others (women?) who also may have received a Resurrection appearance. Matthew's and John's lack of any special reference to Peter (Matt. 28:10; John 20:17) may well indicate that their sources here may be earlier than Mark's or Luke's sources. A good reason can be suggested for adding Peter's name to the Resurrection traditions, but not for deleting it. Conversely, reason can be found for omitting the story of the appearance to the women, but not for introducing it. Although these are admittedly speculative possibilities, this writer believes that they are not necessarily untenable and that they do provide some coherence in this difficult area.

Jesus' Forbidding Mary to Touch Him

A very perplexing problem to biblical scholars has been the

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 85.

strange passage in John 20:17 where Jesus in his Resurrection appearance to Mary forbids her to touch him because he had "not yet ascended to the Father." This is especially confusing because later in 20:24-29 Thomas is actually invited to touch the risen Jesus by Jesus himself. The suggestion, of course, is that between the appearance of Jesus to Mary and the appearance to the disciples (*i.e.*, between vv. 18 and 19) Jesus' ascension actually occurred. Hugh Anderson, following the lead of C. H. Dodd, suggests that, for John, Jesus became "touchable" only after having completed his "High Priestly" sacrifice and having finished his intercession for the people in the Holy of Holies.⁶⁰ Anderson goes on to say that the "touch me not" given to Mary embodies one of John's special themes. He writes:

According to John, the way of Jesus is from the first the way to the Father, a way that has to be traveled through suffering and death towards "that day" when he will have reached his heavenly glory by the Father's blessing on men. . . . The word "cling" (*haptou*) that occurs in John 20:17 is familiarly used in the healing miracles in the Synoptics in reference to sick people laying hold of Jesus for the healing that is accompanied by the forgiveness of sins, for salvation. So here in Jesus' entreaty to Mary not to cling to him, since he is not yet ascended to the Father, it may well be declared that no grasping of his earthly appearance alone can by itself bring salvation.⁶¹

C. F. Evans believes that the force of John 20:17b is to emphasize the exaltation of Christ to the Father as the fulfillment of the whole gospel of divine sonship (Jn. 1:11-12).⁶² He also says that according to John the ascension of Jesus takes place on Easter morning before the appearances took place.⁶³ Following E. Schweizer,

⁶⁰Hugh Anderson, "The Easter Witness of the Evangelists," The New Testament in Historical and Contemporary Perspective, ed. by Hugh Anderson and William Barclay, Oxford, 1965, p. 52.

⁶¹Ibid. R. H. Fuller agrees with Anderson's interpretation of this passage. Cf. Fuller, op. cit., pp. 138-9.

⁶²Evans, op. cit., pp. 123-4. ⁶³Ibid., pp. 119.

Evans says the early Church understood the Resurrection appearances only as the resurrection of the exalted ascended Jesus; and because of this, Paul later placed his appearance of the risen Christ on the Damascus Road entirely on the same level as those given to the twelve.⁶⁴

Whatever else may be said of this difficult passage, it seems clear that by it John distinguishes between the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. At the time the words of 20:17 were said to Mary, the Resurrection had already occurred and yet the ascension was still future, sometime following the appearance to Mary and before the appearance to the disciples, i.e., sometime between the morning and the evening of the "first day" (cf. 20:1, 19). A. M. Ramsey agrees here⁶⁵ and adds rather surprisingly that as soon as the Lord has ascended, Mary would be able to touch him because new modes of touch would then have become available! He asks when this event occurred and then answers:

Inasmuch as the Spirit cannot be given until Jesus is glorified (7:39) and inasmuch as the going up to the Father and the completion of the glorifying seem to be the same, it seems right to infer that before Jesus comes and breathes the Holy Spirit upon the Church on the evening of Easter day the Ascension has already happened.⁶⁶

Contrary to Bultmann, Ramsey argues that John held that the Ascension or exaltation to glory and the Resurrection were separate events, and ". . . both resurrection and ascension were things which happened."⁶⁷ This fact, Ramsey argues, shows that the Acts account

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 119, 140.

⁶⁵A. M. Ramsey, "What Was the Ascension?" Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament, ed. by M. C. Perry, London, 1965, p. 141.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 142. ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 144.

of the Ascension and John's understanding of it both agree that it was a separate and subsequent event to the resurrection of Jesus, though he admits that this is not always clearly seen in other passages of the New Testament.⁶⁸ Ramsey believes that John introduces this "touch me not" story to emphasize the importance of the Ascension or exaltation of Jesus which, though important to the resurrection of Jesus, is subsequent to it.

This view which Ramsey argues for, however, is fraught with difficulty especially through a comparison of other New Testament passages where exaltation seems inseparably linked with the resurrection of Jesus, *i.e.*, by means of the resurrection from the dead Jesus has been exalted or glorified.⁶⁹ Perhaps C. H. Dodd is correct in connecting this story not so much with exaltation as with John's portraying the picture of the High Priest going into the Holy of Holies to offer his sacrifice. Only after this offering for the people has been made will Jesus, the High Priest, be touchable. But, if this is the case--and it is by no means clear that it is--then John uses this particular story as a picture to emphasize a point which he nowhere else explains. Also, to pour a lot of meaning into the term ἄπτοῦ ("to cling") as R. H. Fuller has done seems equally unjustified and foreign to the context. Fuller may be right in suggesting that the whole verse (v. 17) is a later Johannine redac-

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁶⁹Note: Rom. 1:4 or even Phil. 2:9-11 where the Resurrection is assumed. A good discussion of this question is found in Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-9; also cf. O'Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-52. Lloyd Geering, who argues that at first Easter faith was expressed in terms of exaltation of the crucified Jesus and not resurrection, has rather weak support for his position. Cf. Lloyd Geering, Resurrection: A Symbol of Hope, London, 1971, pp. 146-ff.

tion introduced for the purpose of adding a charge to go tell the disciples which is similar to that found in Matthew and Mark.⁷⁰ At any rate, John evidently wants to point to the ascension of Jesus for special emphasis and does so in this way. For him the Ascension occurred after the first appearance and before the second. After the Ascension it was proper for Thomas to touch Jesus (even though the passage does not actually say that he did). John evidently has reasons for not making the exaltation of Jesus synonymous with the crucifixion--as Bultmann would have it. O'Collins points out that such an identification would lead to the docetic notion that only the spirit ascended into heaven while the body remained behind.⁷¹

In his excellent summary of the discussion of this problem, Raymond Brown⁷² has tried to advance the view that the Resurrection does not easily fit within John's scheme of the exaltation of Jesus on the cross; but, since it was too firm a part of the Christian tradition, he sought to make it fit into the process of Jesus' passing from this world to the Father. Accepting that for John the crucifixion of Jesus becomes a part of his glorification, John ". . . dramatizes the resurrection so that it is obviously part of the ascension."⁷³ Brown argues that John uses the appearance to Mary Magda-

⁷⁰Fuller, op. cit., p. 138. There is some question on whether the first πατέρα of this passage should be followed by μου (p⁶⁶ AKLXΘΠΨ, etc.), but there is also fairly good evidence for πατέρα alone (ΣBDW). Whether this element of doubt should suggest other weaknesses in the originality of the passage is questionable but a point for consideration.

⁷¹O'Collins, op. cit., p. 52. He believes John is best understood when the exaltation implied by Jesus being put on the cross (Jn. 12:32-33) ". . . was manifested by the reality of the resurrection and ascension." Ibid.

⁷²Cf. Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John, New York, 1970, pp. 992-4, 1011-7.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 1013-4.

lene as a vehicle to explain that only after the Ascension--of which the Resurrection is a part--can the enduring presence of Jesus in the Spirit be given. He notes that in 7:39 John says that only after Jesus' glorification could there be the gift of the Spirit. Consequently, when Jesus offers the Spirit in 20:22, Brown says John was saying that Jesus had already been exalted and glorified--i.e., he had already ascended to the Father.⁷⁴ It is therefore the ascended and thereby glorified Jesus who appeared to the disciples.

Naturally, the question arises whether John meant that the appearance to Mary took place before the Ascension but that the appearance to the disciples took place after the Ascension. Brown rightly says that taken at face value this would deny that the Resurrection is the same as the Ascension since there is an interval between them. It would also imply that the appearance to Mary was one of an inferior status.⁷⁵ Along with this comes the difficulty of John's dispensing with the Ascension at the end of the earthly appearances over against Luke since, as Brown notes, John does not have an Ascension after the appearances to the disciples and to Thomas.

Brown answers this problem by saying that an understanding of John's technique provides a solution to these questions. He contends that John is:

... fitting a theology of resurrection/ascension that by definition has no dimensions of time and space into a narrative that is necessarily sequential. If John's purpose is forgotten, the attempt to dramatize in temporal scenes what is sub specie aeternitatis creates confusion. When the risen Jesus has to explain to Mary Magdalene that he is about to ascend, the emphasis is on the identification of the resurrection and the ascension, not on the accidental time lag. In Johannine thought there is only one risen Jesus, and he appears in glory in all his

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 1014. ⁷⁵Ibid.

appearances.⁷⁶

Brown thus believes that the temporal sequence of events is not the controlling interest in John, but his theological motive for explaining the meaning of the Resurrection and the fact that the disciples were given the continuing presence of the Spirit by the risen Jesus.⁷⁷ Brown sees as the controlling theme in John's Resurrection narrative the intimate connection between the Ascension of the Son of Man and the giving of the Spirit. He recalls in 16:7 Jesus says, "If I do not go away, the Paraclete will never come to you; whereas, if I do go, I shall send him to you." Brown concludes that this is fulfilled in John immediately following Jesus' death as 20:17, 22 shows by means of associating the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the giving of the Spirit.⁷⁸

Brown's discussion of this problem has great merit; and in fact, the basic weakness in his proposal which presents itself to this writer is his willingness to make the Resurrection in John little more than an appendage to an already complete gospel. Although John emphasizes the importance of the cross throughout his narrative--certainly more so than in the Synoptic tradition, he does not simply add the Easter narrative because it was such a firm part of the Christian tradition. How could the cross become a sign of triumph until the Resurrection had come?

It may be admitted that the cross of Jesus by itself is found in Paul's preaching even in the 40's and 50's A.D. (I Cor. 1:18-24), but the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews,⁷⁹ and it had to be

⁷⁶*Ibid.* ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 1015. ⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 1015-6.

⁷⁹*I.e.*, Paul himself evidently had to overcome the scandal of a crucified Messiah. Cf. Gal. 3:13.

removed as such and seen as a sign of triumph, not confusion or despair. The cross was understood by Paul and the rest of the early Church in light of the resurrection of Jesus. Even Bultmann admits that the early Church overcame the scandal of the cross in the Easter faith.⁸⁰ He writes:

The rise of Easter faith made necessary a way of understanding the cross that would surmount, yes, transform, the scandal of the curse which in Jewish opinion had befallen the crucified Jesus⁸¹

The cross in all of its ambiguity therefore never gave rise to Easter faith. The scandal of the cross was removed for Paul on the Damascus road. There are no examples in early Christian preaching of the cross being proclaimed in its historical ambiguity apart from the presupposed occurrence of Easter. Only after the resurrection of Jesus did the cross become a sign of triumph and hope. In the early speeches in Acts it is the Resurrection which has the dominant place in the apostolic preaching. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus so influenced and motivated the earliest preaching that the death of Christ seems to have been less important than it later became. There is little theological significance attached to the death of Jesus in those speeches, and their primary thrust seems to be the vindication and exaltation of Jesus as seen in the fact that God has raised him from the dead.⁸² In 2:32, 33 and 5:30, 31, the resurrection of Jesus, not the cross, is directly related to his exaltation. The more expanded theology of the cross is therefore later and a consequence of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Also in the Acts

⁸⁰Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1970-1, I, 45.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²See especially Acts 2:23-36; 3:13-16; 4:8-12, 32.

10 speech, Peter proclaims the death of Jesus with no evident intent to relate forgiveness to that event at all. It is only after his proclamation of the Resurrection that Jesus becomes the object of faith.⁸³ The speech attributed to Paul in Acts 13:28-40 also says little about the salvific significance of the cross, but emphasizes that because of Jesus' resurrection, forgiveness of sins is offered through him (vv. 37-38).⁸⁴

Returning to John, the disciples forsook Jesus at his arrest, and Peter even denied him. From the time of the arrest of Jesus (18:1-ff.) up to the discovery of the empty tomb, there is no sound of victory in John.⁸⁵ Although John finds the death--or the manner of the death--of Jesus a fulfillment of Scripture (19:24, 37), the sound of joy or triumph such as that found in 20:18 ("I have seen the Lord") or 20:29 ("My Lord and my God") is completely lacking in John's version of the passion of Jesus. In John's passion and Resurrection narratives, the exaltation of Jesus (or his glorification) is set forth only after the Resurrection, not the crucifixion.

Brown is right, however, to see that the Ascension in John is a part of the Resurrection which awkwardly--from a temporal point of view--takes place between the appearance of Jesus to Mary and the

⁸³Cf. 10:39-43.

⁸⁴It is generally conceded by modern scholars that the speeches in Acts precede the author of the Luke-Acts and in fact illustrate differing strands of theology which he incorporated in his work. Cf. C. F. D. Moule, "The Christology of Acts," Studies in Luke-Acts, ed. by Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn, New York, 1966, pp. 159-85, in which he demonstrates that the Christology in the speeches in Acts is not uniform. Exactly how early these speeches may have been formed is not known, but that they point to a primitive Christology in the early Church which is based upon the resurrection of Jesus and not the cross is clear.

⁸⁵19:35 is considered by most scholars to be a redactional verse. This is quite clear from the verse itself.

appearance to the rest of the disciples. As with the story about the disciples' visit to the tomb (20:3-10), John has made use of the story of the appearance to Mary Magdalene to point to a very important matter; in this case it is the presence of the Spirit and the exaltation (glorification) of Jesus.

This passage of course raises two further problems. First of all, in Matthew's account of Jesus' appearance to the women (28:9-10), immediately after the angelic announcement⁸⁶ the women actually touch Jesus and are not rebuked for doing so, nor is any mention made of the Ascension. The difference here is probably to be found in John's "theological interpretation" of the appearance. Secondly, as was mentioned above, in Luke's Gospel and in Acts 1 the Ascension follows the appearances and clearly does not precede them. In John the Ascension, like the Resurrection, is not seen by witnesses; but in Luke-Acts the ascension of Jesus to heaven appears to be a fairly visible event, indeed, it is the final appearance of Jesus. This problem and the possibility of a further explanation will be discussed more completely in the next section.

What Was the Ascension?⁸⁷

A rather puzzling aspect of the Resurrection narratives is that of the Ascension briefly narrated only in Luke 24:50-53 and Acts

⁸⁶This is probably the same appearance as is found in John 20:17.

⁸⁷Because the Ascension, according to Luke and the traditional way of viewing this event, was the last or final appearance of Jesus before his exaltation, it will be discussed in this section dealing with the appearance stories. It may also be added that, although John doubtlessly views the Ascension of Jesus in a different way than does Luke, he still refers to this event in the context of an appearance to Mary. For these reasons it is probably best to discuss the Ascension in the context of the appearances rather than in a separate treatment.

1:9-11 and alluded to in John 20:17. As was shown above, John places the Ascension between the first and second appearances of Jesus whereas Luke seems to indicate that it occurred at the close of a series of Resurrection appearances. Luke and John alone mention the Ascension while Matthew closes his Gospel emphasizing the abiding presence of Jesus. Mark ends abruptly and has no mention of the Ascension. Matthew, however, who has very little narrative in his appearance stories comparatively speaking, only has a talking risen Christ. Luke and John, on the other hand, include not only a statement from the risen Lord but also narratives of his activity among the disciples. This should not take away from Matthew, however, since his purpose from the beginning of his Gospel is to emphasize that God has come among men and continues to do so.⁸⁸ Matthew indeed presents the gospel story of how God came to be with man. An Ascension story as such does not fit into his purpose. Along with this he shows no awareness of any Ascension tradition such as that found in Luke or John although it might be argued that 24:30 and 26:64 allude to Christ's coming to the earth on the clouds of heaven. Matthew shows here and in his appearance story that he was aware of the exaltation of Christ.

It has been asked whether the developing tradition in the early Church toward a more physical resurrection of Jesus gave rise to the question of the ultimate end of the body of Jesus. G. W. H. Lampe believes that the early understanding of the resurrection of Jesus came to be thought of in terms of the Old Testament materialistic notions of resurrection. From this concept the developing Easter tradition concluded that the tomb of Jesus was also empty;

⁸⁸Cf. 1:23; 18:20; 28:20.

and, because of this materialistic conception of the Resurrection, according to Professor Lampe, the question was ultimately raised, "What happened to the risen body of flesh and bones in the end?"⁸⁹ Lampe concludes that Luke provides the answer: the body was taken up in the Ascension.⁹⁰

Lampe, however, does not discuss the various possible meanings of the Ascension in Luke and John. For John the Ascension is evidently to be equated with the exaltation of Jesus; and for Luke there are several meanings possible, *i.e.*, the completion of the appearances (Luke 24:50-53) and/or the basis for the forthcoming narrative in the Acts, especially the coming of the Holy Spirit.⁹¹ As Ramsey notes, there is nothing incredible in the idea that Jesus gave a parting appearance to his disciples at the close of his series of appearances. He writes:

There is nothing incredible in an event whereby Jesus assured the disciples that the appearances were ended and that His sovereignty and His presence must henceforth be sought in new ways.⁹²

It seems probable then that John and Luke used a well-known piece of tradition common in the early Church, but each has modified it in his own way and for his own purpose.

It should be noted that both John and Luke have the Ascension

⁸⁹G. W. H. Lampe and D. M. MacKinnon, The Resurrection, London, 1966, p. 54.

⁹⁰Ibid. Bultmann says for Paul the resurrection of Jesus meant simultaneously his exaltation, but in the subsequent development of the Easter tradition the Resurrection was interpreted as a temporary return to life on earth, and this idea gave rise to the Ascension story. See Bultmann, loc. cit.

⁹¹Cf. Daniel P. Fuller, Easter Faith and History, London, 1968, pp. 197-8.

⁹²A. Michael Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ, London, 1966, p. 123.

on the Resurrection day.⁹³ Luke, however, places the Ascension at the end of the appearances while John has it in the midst of them. Any attempts to bring John and Luke together on the time of the Ascension appear to be fruitless, but it is not an insignificant question to ask how each writer viewed the Ascension of Jesus.

In all likelihood the appearance of Jesus to Mary at the tomb is a story through which John is trying to present a "theological truth" which must not be misunderstood, namely that the exaltation of Christ is to be seen through a pattern of death, resurrection, and ascension. The story is possibly meant to be an argument against the docetic teaching of Jesus' ascending into heaven at the moment of his death on the cross. John is quite opposed to that view since for him the order is death, resurrection, ascension (or exaltation/glorification) before the giving of the Spirit. John 7:39 makes it quite clear that only after the glorification of Jesus could the Spirit be given; and this, according to John 20:17-20, followed the Resurrection. Raymond Brown is right when he states that the difficulty of having an unglorified appearance of Jesus to Mary should be subdued in John in light of his purpose in showing that the exaltation of Jesus to the Father came by way of the cross, resurrection, and ascension.⁹⁴ Also he is correct in saying that no appearance of Jesus was from an unexalted Lord.⁹⁵

⁹³John 20:17-20 implies this much, and Luke 24:51 is quite clear that Jesus "was carried up into heaven." The καὶ . . . οὐρανὸν of v. 51, along with the other so-called "interpolations" of the Neutral text have significantly strong manuscript support to convince this writer that these words were original to the earliest text.

⁹⁴Brown, op. cit., p. 1014.

⁹⁵Ibid. This can be seen in Mary's second report to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" (20:18).

If the Ascension in John can be equated with the exaltation of Jesus, as seems the case there, then all of the appearances are from the exalted Lord. For John, then, the Holy Spirit comes only after the Ascension (glorification) of Jesus (7:39; 20:17-23).

Remarkably, this is also true for Luke. In 24:49 the promise of the Father, i.e., the "power from on high," is given again with the purpose of enabling the disciples to witness. After this promise is given, then Luke depicts the departure or ascension of Jesus in familiar Old Testament imagery.⁹⁶ Shortly after the departure of Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes. It is quite clear that in both John and Luke the Ascension of Jesus is related to and takes place before the coming of the Holy Spirit although their descriptions of this are strikingly different one from the other. It appears that both Luke and John view the Ascension as the exaltation of Jesus, the result of which is the giving of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁷

In the rest of the New Testament, however, Jesus' resurrection is not distinguishable from his exalted status, and neither is there much evidence for making two separate events out of the resurrection and the exaltation of Jesus.⁹⁸ A. M. Ramsey points out that in Acts 2:32-33; 5:30-31; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Philipians 2:8-9; Ephesians 1:19-20; I Timothy 3:16; and I Peter 3:21-22 there seems to be a linking together of Christ's resurrection with his

⁹⁶R. H. Fuller draws parallels to the assumption of Elijah in II Kings 2:11. Fuller, op. cit., p. 128.

⁹⁷This may be saying more than the text does, but the timing of the Ascension in both Gospels leads in this direction.

⁹⁸Barnabas Lindars has a careful discussion of this question in his study of Acts 2 where he concludes that the exaltation of Jesus could be an alternative way of describing the resurrection. Cf. Barnabas Lindars, New Testament Apologetic, London, 1973, pp. 38-45.

exaltation or ascension.⁹⁹ The New Testament elsewhere apparently makes little differentiation between the ascension (or exaltation) and the resurrection of Jesus; in fact, the former is scarcely mentioned unless it is to be equated with the exaltation to the right hand of the Father.

Can it then be concluded that the ascension of Jesus is not so much a necessary story to account for the growing tradition concerning the physical nature of the resurrection of Jesus, as Lampe would have it, as it is a graphic illustration of a "theological" issue, namely, that in the resurrection Jesus has been exalted and the promise of the Spirit assured? In the rest of the New Testament (aside from the Gospels) there seems to be a pattern which sees the exaltation of Jesus emerging from an interpretation of the Resurrection,¹⁰⁰ although Philippians 2:8-ff. appears to be an exception to this.¹⁰¹ John develops the theme of Jesus' exaltation by his being "lifted up" on the cross, as Bultmann notes;¹⁰² but he does so only through Jesus' resurrection from the grave. O'Collins rightly points out that one of John's themes is that the Word was manifested in the flesh (1:14); consequently any ascension of only Jesus' spirit would

⁹⁹A. M. Ramsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-9. He admits that a case could possibly be argued to the contrary from Phil. 2:8-9; I. Tim. 3:16; and I Pet. 3:21-22.

¹⁰⁰O'Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 51, argues this point especially from Romans and I Corinthians.

¹⁰¹It is true that Hebrews portrays the exaltation of Christ in his death; but there is no early evidence to show that Jesus' death was ever viewed in terms of exaltation apart from his resurrection. There are no signs indicating that the death of Jesus brought more than gloom before a firm belief in his resurrection. Death on the cross was viewed as victory only after the resurrection of Jesus, not before.

¹⁰²Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, ed. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and

go contrary to this affirmation.¹⁰³ He believes that John's seeing of the exaltation of Jesus in his being lifted up on the cross (12: 32-33) "... was manifested by the reality of the resurrection and ascension."¹⁰⁴ Luke, on the other hand, directly refers to the exaltation of Jesus as his resurrection.¹⁰⁵

Apart from Luke and John there are no other New Testament writers who set forth the belief that the Ascension was subsequent to the resurrection of Jesus. Elsewhere in the New Testament, these events are interchangeable. What is drawn out in Luke and John, however, is a "theological" difference between Resurrection and Ascension rather than a "historical" one. Ramsey describes the "theological" distinction between the Resurrection and the Ascension thus:

The former image was associated with an event to which the apostles bore witness; but the latter image was no mere rhetorical pendant. There was a significant theological distinction between the two. It was one thing to say *χριστὸς ἀνέστη*; it meant that Jesus was no longer dead and that the prophecy "thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption" had been fulfilled. It was another thing to say *χριστὸς ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ*; it meant that he was not only alive but sovereign: it suggested the text, "Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet."¹⁰⁶

He illustrates this theological separation by saying:

The two images represent two distinct truths. . . . When the apostles ask in Acts 1, "Lord dost thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?", they know about the Resurrection but the truth of the exalted sovereignty has not yet come home to them.¹⁰⁷

It would appear then that the Ascension is more of a theo-

J. K. Riches, Philadelphia, 1971, p. 684.

¹⁰³O'Collins, *loc. cit.* ¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵Cf. 24:26, 46. O'Collins argues that these verses indicate that what followed Jesus' death was interchangeably called exaltation and resurrection. *Ibid.*, p. 51. He also finds this to be true of Matthew's description of the risen Lord. Cf. Matt. 28:16-ff.

¹⁰⁶Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p. 140. ¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

logical interpretation of the significance of the Resurrection rather than a historical event separate from it. On the other hand, this does not preclude the possibility that Jesus may have assembled his disciples for a final appearance before his departure from them (Luke) to explain perhaps the necessity of their looking for another continuing manifestation of his presence with them, i.e., in the Holy Spirit. Luke and John in differing ways speak of the Ascension in a context closely associated with the giving of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁸

There is yet another question concerning the time of the Ascension in Luke. It has to do with the discrepancy between Luke 24, on the one hand, where the Ascension takes place late on the same day as the Resurrection, and Acts, on the other, where it occurs only after "40 days" of repeated appearances.

Most probably the number "forty" is a special "holy" number not to be taken literally¹⁰⁹ as with Moses' "forty days" on Mt. Sinai, the "forty years" in the wilderness, and in Luke the "forty days" of Christ's temptation.¹¹⁰ Hugh Anderson sees in the "forty days:"

... a theological significance, representing for Luke the holy interval in the "sacred history" in which the apostles must be prepared for their task of witness in the period of the Church after the Ascension of Christ and the bestowal of the Spirit.¹¹¹

O'Collins, however, believes that the mention of the "forty days" in Acts 1 is Luke's attempt, like John and Paul, to link closely the

¹⁰⁸This is clear in John where 16:5-7 is a fairly vivid portrayal of 20:17-22. In these passages Jesus goes to the Father and the Holy Spirit is subsequently given. Luke 24:49-52 and Acts 1:1-11 also associate Jesus' going to the Father with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁹See Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins, op. cit., p. 232.

¹¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹¹Ibid.

intimate association between the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He writes:

His "forty days" helps to ensure that his readers will understand Pentecost as the extension of Easter and the manifest outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the gift of the risen Christ.¹¹²

But if this is so, one may ask why Luke stops at "forty days"? Why not "fifty days" to coincide with Pentecost?

It is important, as Hugh Anderson states, that the "forty days" mentioned here (Acts 1:3) indicate that there was a ". . . specific and limited time for the Resurrection appearances."¹¹³ After a time--however long it was--the kind of appearances experienced by the disciples terminated.¹¹⁴ If the "forty days" are to be taken literally, then there is a clear discrepancy between Luke 24 and Acts 1 regarding the length of the appearances and the time of the Ascension. On the other hand, if the number "forty" is a "holy number" as Anderson suggests, the meaning of that number is not at all clear. What special significance can be deduced from the "forty days"? Does it have some salvation theme or connotation? It is not repeated in the Acts in reference to the time of the Ascension (13:31) or of the length of the appearances (10:41).

As was suggested before, the answer to the discrepancies between Luke 24 and Acts 1 lies perhaps in the changing of Luke's purpose in each instance. In Luke 24, Jesus apparently offers a final appearance to the disciples the purpose of which is to indicate the cessation of his Resurrection appearances. He then departs in a

¹¹²O'Collins, op. cit., p. 87. ¹¹³Anderson, loc. cit.

¹¹⁴R. H. Fuller agrees with this and adds that I Cor. 15:3-ff. shows that the kind of appearances experienced by the apostles ceased after a time. Cf. Reginald H. Fuller, Luke's Witness of Jesus Christ, London, 1963, p. 78.

very graphic manner, i.e., he is "carried up into heaven."¹¹⁵ The point it seems to make clear is that the appearances as such would cease, and the disciples were to look forward to a new manifestation of the presence of God in their midst. "And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (24:49 RSV). In Acts 1:1-5 Luke is giving more of a summary of the contents of the first volume of his two volume work. He is simply restating the climactic ending of his Gospel so the reader does not forget the point of the Gospel in the process of going on to the second volume.¹¹⁶ The number "forty" in 1:3 indicating the length of the appearances is clearly different from the length of the appearances implied in the Gospel, but perhaps the writer is trying to indicate with this number the salvific nature of the appearances rather than their length. Dogmatism here, however, is unwarranted. Finally, in Acts 1:6-11 Luke is trying to describe the Ascension as a means of terminating the appearances in order to prepare the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the evangelistic ministry of the Church, and the return of Christ to the earth--evidently to establish his kingdom (cf. 1:6-7).¹¹⁷

C. F. Evans believes that this "theological" explanation for the discrepancies between the three Ascension stories in Luke-Acts is

¹¹⁵The evidence for these words is quite strong. For an excellent discussion of the evidence for their genuineness, see Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, London, 1971, pp. 189-93.

¹¹⁶D. P. Fuller, op. cit., p. 198.

¹¹⁷Luke obviously has not eliminated the apocalyptic nature of the kingdom as he seeks to emphasize the ministry of the Spirit, or rather the "power from on high" to evangelize. The kingdom is temporarily delayed, but for Luke the surety of its coming is maintained (1:11). Luke 19:11-27 is an indication of Luke's understanding of the abeyance of the kingdom, but not its elimination.

quite tenuous.¹¹⁸ For him, whether "Luke the historian" is justified in becoming "Luke the theologian" and whether this transition releases him from a feeling of contradiction is not an easy question to answer. He says such an interpretation naturally raises the question whether Luke 24:50-53 is the more realistic account of the Ascension or whether it is better to say that Acts 1:1-11 is the more accurate picture.¹¹⁹ There seems to be no consensus here. This writer would suggest that "Luke the theologian" is quite active in all three passages (Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-5, 6-11) playing a dominant role. This seems apparent because the Ascension serves several purposes in Luke-Acts,¹²⁰ not the least of which was to point to the exaltation of Christ in his resurrection.¹²¹ Along with this, it is not clear that Luke, in his continuous narrative of the appearances, intended for the reader to allow for only one day for all the events of Luke 24. This writer sees the possibility of history giving way to theology at this point in Luke.

In seeking to answer the original question posed at the beginning of this section, the Ascension probably should not be separated from either the Resurrection or the exaltation of Jesus; and it is best understood "theologically" as an indicator of the early Church's understanding of what the resurrection of Jesus meant. Historically there may have been a final appearance of Jesus indicating a cessation of all such appearances, but that which is dominant in both Luke and John in the Ascension is the exaltation of Jesus.

¹¹⁸Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-1. ¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-8.

¹²¹Acts 2:32-36 shows that the Resurrection is proof of the exaltation of Jesus which in turn describes the Ascension.

Matthew also, who has no mention of an Ascension, is quite clear that in the Resurrection Jesus has been exalted. No less than this could be derived from the statement, "All power (authority) in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Matthew's Risen Lord is an exalted Lord and no less exalted than the ascended Risen Lord in either Luke or John. Matthew portrays the appearance of the Risen Lord as a heavenly appearance, i.e., a post-Ascension appearance, as does Paul in I Corinthians 15. In the Acts 26 speech on Paul's defense before Agrippa, verses 13 and 19 indicate that what Paul saw, i.e., the appearance of Jesus to him, was from "heaven." Such references combined with the Johannine appearances of the ascended Lord indicate strongly that all of the appearances of Jesus were from heaven and that they were from the already ascended-glorified Lord. The main objection to this view is Luke's placing of the Ascension at the end of all of the appearances; but it can be argued that Luke's portrayal of the Risen Lord is not unlike the exalted ascended Lord of John, Matthew, and Paul. Notice for example in Luke, Jesus explains to the two disciples the necessity of his suffering and entering into his glory (24:27). Here there is no mention of his rising after his death, only his entering into "his glory," although this comes out later in verse 46. Along with this, Jesus is not recognizable to the two disciples until the breaking of the bread at which time he disappears (24:31). Their response, which shows strong indications of being an earlier kerygmatic tradition used by Luke in his narrative, is that "the Lord has risen indeed" (v. 34). Luke's account (24:36-53) does not mention an Ascension in the same manner as John, only that at the end of the appearances of the Risen Lord (v. 34) he departs from the disciples after giving to them the promise of the Spirit (v. 49). After Jesus was carried up into heaven,

the disciples worshiped him. Clearly, Luke indicates in his narrative that the Risen Lord is the exalted Lord before his final departure. Along with this, there is nothing in Luke-Acts which, strictly speaking, would prohibit all the appearances of Jesus from being "heavenly" appearances of an already ascended Lord. The last appearance was described in the realistic manner of 24:51 and Acts 1:9 to indicate in graphic terms the cessation of all such appearances, to point to the new continuing presence and power of God in his Church by his Holy Spirit, and to point to the importance of the Church's mission.

In conclusion, the Ascension story was the early Church's understanding of the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus, i.e., in his Resurrection, he was exalted and glorified and made worthy of worship and service. All of the appearances were appearances of the exalted glorified Lord. John's story of the Ascension (20:17-23) makes it clear that the Risen Lord is glorified (cf. 7:39) and is worthy to be worshiped (20:28). Neither for John nor for Luke, however, is the time of the Ascension important. For them the exaltation of Jesus in his resurrection is the point of primary significance.

The Nature of the Resurrection Appearances

One of the more significant problems relating to the post-Easter appearances of Jesus has to do with the nature of the Easter manifestations to the disciples. Should these manifestations be understood as subjective visions or hallucinations born out of the faith of the earliest disciples in their departed Lord,¹²² or on the

¹²²Bultmann leaves this open as a possibility, though in fact he shows little interest in the question at all. See the discussion

other hand should the appearances be understood as bodily appearances? Another view that has been increasingly popular among New Testament scholars is that the Resurrection appearances were objective visions imparted to the discouraged disciples by the Risen Lord himself whose body may in fact have decomposed somewhere in Palestine.¹²³ The answer to the question will involve a careful investigation of several very difficult passages from the Resurrection narratives.¹²⁴ The following discussion is an attempt to bring together relevant information on this question and to set forth this writer's understanding of the matter.

The two verbs used most frequently in the New Testament in reference to the resurrection of Jesus are ἐγείρειν and ἀνιστάναι, both of which appear earlier in the intertestamental literature. ἐγείρειν was used very little in secular Greek for the resurrection of the dead and instead is used more often to refer to an awakening,¹²⁵ a lifting up, or a raising. ἀνιστάναι was sometimes used of raising the dead, but this is not always clear. The root meanings of these words, however, do not bear much resemblance to their use in the New Testament for the resurrection of Jesus.¹²⁶ C. F. Evans believes

of this question in Chapter IV, pp. 166-8.

¹²³This position is held by Hans Grass, Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte, Göttingen, 1962, pp. 247-ff., and Lampe, op. cit., pp. 36-ff.

¹²⁴It should be added that the question about the nature of the Resurrection appearances is not equal in importance to the fact of the Resurrection. It is a pity that there are Christians who are unwilling to allow for disagreement in this very difficult area. Cf. Clark H. Pinnock, "'On the Third Day,'" Jesus of Nazareth: Saviour and Lord, ed. by Carl F. H. Henry, London, 1966, p. 154 who writes, "Without the bodily resurrection the meaning of the gospel is radically altered, and faith of no avail."

¹²⁵This is also true in Eph. 5:14.

¹²⁶Evans, Resurrection and the New Testament, op. cit., pp.

that the New Testament understanding of resurrection is better conveyed by the words "to live," "to make alive," and "to glorify."¹²⁷ He explains:

The resurrection of Christ is a living after death, and the conquest of death, so that he has dominion over all men (Rom. 14:9), and being the conquest of sin is a life lived permanently to God (Rom. 6:13; 14:8f.; II Cor. 13:4; Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:1f.), and who will be "made alive" (ζωοποιεῖ John 5:21 . . .). Since the word "glory" is the biblical word which comes nearest to expressing the being and nature of God himself, it is inevitably connected with the thought of resurrection as entry into the divine life.¹²⁸

A belief in the resurrection from the dead was not universally accepted by all Jews in the time of Christ. This is clearly illustrated in the New Testament by the debates on the resurrection between the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Acts 23:7-8). There seems to have been a general understanding and acceptance of varying notions of the resurrection of the dead on the part of a significant number of Jews during this time however.¹²⁹

Paul's use of the term ὥφθην (aorist passive indicative of ὀφθαλμός) in I Corinthians 15 has been judged by some scholars to be a technical term used primarily of a vision from God in biblical writings.¹³⁰ The term, if used in this technical sense, might then imply that what the early witnesses to the appearances of Christ experienced was a vision or some special revelation from God.¹³¹

20-6.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 26. ¹²⁸Ibid., p. 126.

¹²⁹See previous discussion in Chapter IV, the analysis of the empty tomb, as well as Hooke, op. cit., pp. 5-22, and L. L. Morris, "Resurrection," The New Bible Dictionary, ed. by J. D. Douglas, Grand Rapids, 1962, p. 1086.

¹³⁰See G. W. H. Lampe in Lampe and MacKinnon, op. cit., pp. 36-ff.; Marxsen, op. cit., pp. 23-ff.

¹³¹Lampe and MacKinnon, op. cit., p. 36; Grass, op. cit., pp.

This interpretation allows for the body of Jesus to decompose somewhere in Palestine (the absence of the body from the tomb is explained in natural terms, e.g., theft, wrong tomb, etc., or its absence is denied altogether); and yet it is still maintained that the disciples experienced something, a vision from God, which initiated their Easter faith.

Since Paul says that he, like all the apostles, experienced an "ὥφθη," it has been argued that this early passage indicates the nature of all of the appearances of Christ, i.e., that they were all visionary experiences. In later traditions (the Gospels) the Church, because of its apologetic needs, cast the appearances into a more concrete form as is found in Luke's and John's Resurrection narratives.

ὥφθη, however, is not so much a technical term as it is a neutral word denoting presence. The use of the aorist passive of ὁράω in both Matthew 17:3 and Luke 9:31 leaves the question of the form of seeing open. There is no firm use of ὥφθη in biblical or extra-biblical literature, and any arguments on the nature or form of the appearances based on this term are unwarranted.¹³² Michaelis' summary of the investigation of the various uses of ὥφθη, especially in I Corinthians 15, is worthy of mention here. He concludes:

It thus seems that when ὥφθη is used as a t.t. /technical term/ to denote the resurrection appearances there is no primary emphasis on seeing as sensual or mental perception. The dominant thought is that the appearances are revelations, encounters with the risen Lord who herein reveals Himself or is revealed, cf. Gal. 1:16. . . . The relation of ὥφθη in I Cor. 15:5 ff. to the act. of 9:1 does not involve a simple replacing of the act. by the corresponding form. If so, the significance attached to see-

186-232; Anderson, op. cit., pp. 203-4.

¹³²Bultmann is in basic agreement here. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, ed. by Robert W. Funk, trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith, London, 1966, p. 83, where he writes, "Neither vision nor objective fact can be deduced from the 'was seen.'"

ing would be the same in both instances. The important point about ὥφθη with the dative, however, is that the one who constitutes the subject is the one who acts, i.e., appears, shows himself, with no special emphasis on the resultant action of the person in the dative, namely that he sees or perceives. ὥφθη κηφᾶ etc. does not mean in the first instance that they saw Him, with an emphasis on seeing, e.g., in contrast to hearing. It means rather: παρέστησεν αὐτοῖς ἑαυτὸν ζῶντα (cf. Acts 1:3), or even better: ὁ θεὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν αὐτὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς (cf. Gal. 1:16). He encountered them as risen, living Lord; they experienced His presence. In the last resort even active forms like ἑώρακα in I Cor. 9:1 mean the same thing¹³³

Perhaps much of the confusion here stems from the fact that Paul does not describe his encounter with the Risen Lord in so-called concrete terms, and he also fails to mention the empty-tomb tradition. Luke follows this up by describing Paul's encounter with the Risen Christ as a light from heaven (φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 9:3; 22:6; 26:13) accompanied by a voice (φωνήν, 9:4; 22:7; 26:14) which was intelligible only to Paul. In Acts 26:19 this encounter is described as a τῇ οὐρανίῳ ὀπτασίᾳ, a "heavenly appearing."¹³⁴ There is no justification then for basing any understanding of visionary appearances on the word ὥφθη.

Now what can be concluded about the nature or form of the Resurrection appearances? Paul's argument in I Corinthians 15:42-ff. would indicate a transformed corporeality. Although the presence of Christ in the appearances was non-visionary, there are, as Michaelis contends, no categories of human seeing which are adequate to explain

¹³³Wilhelm Michaelis, "ὄραω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, 1968, V, 358.

¹³⁴ὀπτασίᾳ should not necessarily be thought of as a "vision," a common translation of the word, but an appearance. Luke's normal word for "vision" is ὄραμα, cf. Acts 10:17. It might also be added that the normal designation of ὀπτασίᾳ is that of a non-visionary appearance. See Michaelis, op. cit., pp. 353, 357, 372. An exception to this is in the plural ὀπτασίαις in II Cor. 12:1, but as Michaelis shows the usage there is different than is found in the singular. Ibid., p. 357.

them.¹³⁵ He concludes that the appearances should be described ". . . as manifestations in the sense of revelation rather than making visible."¹³⁶ There is no evidence that Paul either rejected the bodily resurrection of Jesus or yet believed that the resurrected body was to be equated with the present body of flesh. It has already been shown that Paul believed that the Christian's resurrection will be like that of Jesus Christ and that he tried to establish a transformed bodily resurrection for the believer.¹³⁷

It may also be argued that the appearances of Jesus were not proofs primarily demonstrating in an objective manner to everyone that Jesus was alive after death.¹³⁸ Indeed, there are no appearances recorded which were not to his followers or those who became such. Lampe says that the appearances were the way in which the Risen Lord called men into service,¹³⁹ although it must be added that the appearances also called the disciples to a renewed faith in Jesus.

One of the main objections to the "objective" vision proposal is that this understanding of the Resurrection appearances reduces the basis of Christian faith to the testimony of a few individuals who experienced little more than a vision. Such objections come, however, from a failure in part to understand the nature of Christian faith, i.e., that it involves "risk" and cannot seek refuge in the security of some demonstrable facts. This objection

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 359. ¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Cf. Chapter VI, p. 149. This writer is unaware of any significant number of scholars who argue for a physical resurrection of Jesus from the grave in the sense of a restoration or resuscitation to his former earthy existence.

¹³⁸Lampe and MacKinnon, loc. cit. ¹³⁹Ibid.

comes from those who, according to Lampe, seek guarantees for faith; but God, on the other hand, ". . . makes his activity known to faith, and faith is not compatible with unmistakable proofs."¹⁴⁰ Faith is indeed every bit faith and not sight. As will be shown later, Christian faith cannot advance beyond the faith of the earliest Christian disciples, and faith cannot verify the testimonies of those disciples through any historical methods.

But is this view a correct one? It is true that Paul's experience with the Risen Lord seems to be best described by the word vision, as is indeed the case in Acts 26:19. However, were all of the appearances like this? Because the same term, ὥφθη, is used in I Corinthians 15:4-8, does it thereby follow that anything more than Paul's claim to have encountered the same Lord was intended, i.e., the disciples through a bodily appearance and Paul through a visionary one?¹⁴¹ Could it be that Paul's reference to ἑκτρωμα in verse 8 would indicate a difference in his encounter with the Risen Christ? This explanation is mere speculation, of course, and in the hurry to disassociate Paul's experience from that of the other disciples it may fail to recognize the character of the appearances of Jesus in the Gospels.

First of all, it should be noted that in the Gospels there is the peculiar problem of some of the disciples failing to recognize Jesus in his appearances to them.¹⁴² In Luke's story about the appearance on the road to Emmaus, Jesus is not at first recognized;

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 37. ¹⁴¹Cf. Grant, loc. cit.

¹⁴²It is quite possible that the revelatory nature of the appearances is the reason that among the disciples "some doubted" in Matt. 28:17, even though Matthew does not mention directly any difficulty in recognizing the Risen One as Jesus of Nazareth.

but only after he broke bread with the two disciples and departed did they "know" who he was (Luke 24:30-34). In the following appearance to the rest of the disciples, Jesus had to demonstrate that he was not a spirit, and also to dispel the questionings of who he was.¹⁴³ In John 20:14-16, Mary does not at first recognize Jesus until he speaks her name. The Johannine Appendix is quite similar here as well; it is only after a miracle is performed that the Beloved Disciple recognizes that the one standing on the beach is Jesus the Lord (21:4-7). Even John's story of Jesus' appearance to the disciples--without Thomas--suggests the need for Jesus to show some sign to prove he was the same as he who was crucified (20:20).

Reginald Fuller believes that the witnesses' difficulty in recognizing Jesus is a sign that his appearances were not "this-worldly occurrences," but were of a revelatory nature, perceived only by those whose eyes were open to such things.¹⁴⁴ This is a point often overlooked by those who find physical manifestations of the Risen Lord in the Gospels. It is true that Luke takes the time to describe Jesus' resurrection appearances in a concrete physical way (24:37-42), but his purpose for doing so is to dispel the notion that Jesus was a spirit (24:37, 39). Jesus' ability to disappear (24:31) and then to re-appear might give some of the disciples the belief that only a spirit was in their midst, but Luke wishes to emphasize that this is not so; Jesus' new mode of existence was bodily, but not limited by the physical realm of the this-worldly existence. John, who along with Luke describes the resurrection of Jesus in a very concrete fashion, also depicts the Risen Jesus as having no physical

¹⁴³This is apparent from 24:38.

¹⁴⁴R. H. Fuller, op. cit., p. 75.

limitations in his bodily existence. In 20:19 the disciples are huddled together in a house with "the doors being shut;" and yet Jesus comes and stands in their midst, evidently passing through the walls or doors. This seems especially clear in the following appearance to Thomas eight days later, "The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them . . ." (v. 26), yet it is in the Thomas story that an invitation is given by Jesus to touch his hands and side. The new mode of existence of the resurrected Lord was not spirit, but a bodily existence not governed by the limitations of the body which hung on the cross even though it could be identified with it (Jn. 20:20, 27).

Matthew also appears to be in basic agreement with this picture of the Risen Lord. Notice that the stone is rolled away by the angel of the Lord not to let Jesus out, but to let the women in (28:2-6)! Jesus is already out, obviously having come through the walls of the tomb. On the other hand, however, Matthew shows that the Risen Lord can be touched as well as heard (28:9-10).

It seems, therefore, that the problems of doubt and the difficulty in the initial recognition of Jesus in some of the narratives are due to the revelatory and unique nature of the appearances. The resurrection of Jesus was a bodily one, yet beyond the this-worldly understanding of that term. Perhaps some of the many differences between the Resurrection appearances should be understood in such a context, although this cannot be argued conclusively.¹⁴⁵ It is most important, however, that each of the Evangelists in his own way seeks to establish the continuity between the crucified Jesus

¹⁴⁵William Lillie, "The Empty Tomb and the Resurrection," Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament, ed. by M. C. Perry, London, 1965, VI, 132-4.

and the Risen Lord. He who died is the same as he who has appeared to his followers. This for them should be coupled with the charge of evangelism (missionary motif) which is most clearly seen in Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8; and John 20:19-23.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps the desire to show Paul's lack of information regarding the empty tomb has caused some scholars to emphasize the discontinuity between the Gospel narratives and Paul; but even though the Gospels seem to indicate that the appearances of Jesus were physical in nature (so Luke 24 and in John 20:26), they also hint at the revelatory nature of the appearances. In the Gospels it can be seen that the appearances were not just bodily in nature, but that they were of a different order than is generally understood by that term. It may also be suggested that since this is not as clear in the Gospels as it is in Paul, the Gospels should be understood in light of Paul's commentary on the nature of the resurrected body. By studying Paul, the exegete is more aware of a new mode of bodily existence in the resurrection than is apparent in a simple examination of the Gospels by themselves.

The Ascension says in part that the appearances of Christ ceased after a period of time and that whatever their nature, they were encountered by only a select few.¹⁴⁷ Not every Christian encounters Christ in the same way. The Apostles experienced something which not only transformed their lives but which also ceased to occur after a relatively short period of time.

¹⁴⁶The redactional sections, Mk. 16:15-18 and possibly Jn. 21:15-22, should also be added to this.

¹⁴⁷Cf. Acts 1:21-25-- the basis for the selection of an apostolic replacement, and I Cor. 15:8--"last of all ὡς πρῶτον to me."

It cannot be denied (a) that both Paul and the Gospels reflect a spiritual or revelatory encounter with the Risen Lord, but also (b) that they both speak of the bodily nature of the resurrection of Jesus. Together this leads one to conclude that the nature of the resurrected body and therefore the nature of the manifestations to the disciples were spiritual-bodily (transformed-bodily) appearances whatever that may have involved. It has been argued elsewhere¹⁴⁸ that in Paul the "old body" of flesh was transformed and incorporated into the new. How this was done or what the results were remains a mystery, but this writer believes that the truth of the matter probably lies somewhere between a visionary nature of the resurrection and a physical resurrection from the dead. It is significant, however, that all of the New Testament information surrounding the event would coincide with the view of a transformed-bodily resurrection appearance. The empty tomb supports the conclusion that the Resurrection was bodily and the various reports of Jesus' going through doors or suddenly appearing and vanishing (Lk. 24:31) support the contention that the appearances were significantly more than physical manifestations. The varying reports on the location of the Resurrection appearances might also support this thesis. There were no parallels to this kind of a manifestation, and indeed there are none today. The resurrection appearances of Jesus were unique and revelatory and are transmitted as such in the New Testament.

In conclusion, the most important term in discussing this subject is the word "objective." Whether one goes along with H. Grass and G. W. H. Lampe on the nature of the Resurrection appearances or with Karl Barth, G. E. Ladd, and C. F. D. Moule who accept

¹⁴⁸Chapter IV, pp. 152-6.

the transformed bodily Resurrection appearances, both of these positions agree with the fact that the Easter event was not a product of the disciples' faith, but the activity of God. This writer believes, however, that the transformed bodily understanding of the resurrection of Jesus and his appearances best accounts for the New Testament traditions on the subject. At any rate, Bultmann's contention that the resurrection of Jesus was, according to the New Testament, a resuscitation of a corpse cannot be substantiated. R. H. Fuller is correct in saying that the appearances were of a revelatory and not of a "this-worldly" nature.¹⁴⁹

Finally, it is generally agreed that a Christian confesses faith in the Risen Christ. This writer believes, however, that this confession could be stated more precisely by saying that a Christian confesses that Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of faith, actually rose from the dead. The physiological, spiritual, or psychological nature of that event, however, is no more clear to Christian faith than it is to the critical historian. The historian may claim that something happened and the Christian may claim to know what happened, but how it happened escapes both. That Jesus rose from the dead and that he appeared is a part of the Church's confession, but how he was raised (bodily) and how he appeared (bodily) must in large part remain a mystery. In the New Testament this was a revelatory event without parallel; and, though it is possible to say "transformed corporeality" with regard to the resurrection of Jesus, it is by no means clear what exactly is meant thereby. There are no adequate human expressions available for a description of this event.

¹⁴⁹R. H. Fuller, loc. cit.

II. A SUMMARY OF THE EVENTS OF EASTER

From the previous discussion of the Easter tradition, the following may be suggested. The Evangelists are agreed that after Jesus was crucified, he was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb near the city of Jerusalem on the day of Preparation (Friday) as the Sabbath was approaching. When the Sabbath was over a group of women from Galilee (or perhaps just Mary) came to the tomb where Jesus was buried to pay their final respects to their departed Lord. Upon reaching the tomb, however, it was found to be empty; and this was reported by the women perhaps with an assurance of the significance of the tomb to the disciples who were still in Jerusalem possibly in hiding. Some of the disciples, or perhaps just Peter, examined the tomb after hearing the report and confirmed the report that the tomb was in fact empty. This caused questioning among the disciples, but as yet there was no firm commitment of faith at this point, and the disciples returned to Galilee, though it is not clear how soon after the discovery of the tomb that they returned. In Galilee, however, Jesus appeared to the disciples re-establishing their faith and giving to them their call to missionary service. If there were no appearances in Galilee, it is difficult to understand why the disciples ever came back to Jerusalem unless with C. F. D. Moule one is prepared to say that their return was due to the next Pilgrim feast.¹⁵⁰ At any rate, they probably returned to Jerusalem having already experienced in Galilee an appearance from the risen Jesus, though this is not at all clear in the narratives. Jesus' final appearance(s) to the disciples then may have been in Jerusalem or

¹⁵⁰Moule, "The Post-Resurrection Appearance in Light of Festival Pilgrimages," op. cit., pp. 58-ff.

just outside of Jerusalem. Though the location of the appearances is not clear in the Easter narratives, the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to them is. Belief in Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the conviction that he had indeed appeared to the disciples after his resurrection became the primary thrust of the early Christian preaching (Acts 2).

Although there is no doubt about the earliest Christians' belief in the resurrection of Jesus, the nature of his resurrection is not at all clear. Although the empty tomb indeed pointed to the mode of his resurrection, there is no clear understanding of the nature of the Resurrection appearances. In the Gospels the resurrected Jesus is seen walking through closed doors, appearing and disappearing at will, and leaving an element of doubt regarding the ability of the disciples to recognize him. This plus the manner in which Luke describes Paul's encounter with the Risen Lord, together with the language Paul himself uses to describe that encounter, leads one to believe that the appearances were more than simple visions, yet not at all normal physical manifestations. For these reasons, this writer suggests that the most appropriate way of describing the appearances of Jesus is to say that they were "revelatory" or "revelational," thereby retaining something of the unique and mysterious character of the appearances.

This rather brief digest of the preceding investigation of the Resurrection narratives is an attempt not only to point out some of the difficulties in the Easter traditions, but also and primarily to indicate this writer's understanding of the events of Easter. The above is offered as a small contribution toward the unraveling of the Easter story and is not intended to be a definitive explanation of what happened in the resurrection of Jesus.

III. FURTHER COMMENT ON THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVES

There are at least eleven distinguishable appearance stories in the Gospel narratives (including Mk. 16:9-20 and Jn. 21) in which the Risen Lord appears to his followers. They are as follows:

1. Matthew 28:9-10, to the women at the tomb.
2. Matthew 28:16-20, to the eleven disciples in Galilee.
3. Luke 24:13-35, to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus.¹⁵¹
4. Luke 24:36-53, to the disciples in Jerusalem (vv. 50-53 are treated as part of the same appearance).
5. John 20:11-18, to Mary Magdalene at the tomb.
6. John 20:19-23, to the disciples in Jerusalem.
7. John 20:24-29, to Thomas in Jerusalem.
8. John 21:1-22, to the seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (the dialogue with Peter [v. 15-22] is evidently in the presence of the others).¹⁵²
9. Mark 16:9-11, to Mary Magdalene.¹⁵²
10. Mark 16:12-13, to the two disciples walking in the country (Emmaus?).¹⁵²
11. Mark 16:14-20, to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem (?) (this was concluded with his Ascension).¹⁵²

Although Luke has no appearance of Jesus to the women as does Matthew (28:9-10) and John (20:11-18), it is difficult to see what is disclosed in Matthew's and John's narration of such an appearance which is not discernible in Luke's witness of the two angels at the

¹⁵¹The appearance to Peter in 24:34 is only stated rather than narrated.

¹⁵²This story is not to be accepted as an original part of the Gospel in which it appears.

tomb. Matthew's account of the appearance of Jesus to the women adds little to the story already told by the angel (28:5-7), unless its purpose is to indicate to the women that in their ability to touch Jesus' feet they were encountering a "real Person."¹⁵³ However, this point is clear in the angelic message; and it is difficult to see why Matthew added this appearance unless there was a strong tradition behind it causing the writer to incorporate it into his narrative.

The similar passage in John where Jesus appears to Mary¹⁵⁴ also appears to be a very early tradition. John completely negates the message of the angels to Mary in favor of making the disclosure of the meaning of the empty tomb come from the Risen Lord himself. Matthew and John agree that Jesus appeared to the women at the tomb and even on the fact that Jesus was touched by them (or Mary) as well as the fact that they were given the charge to tell the disciples. The basic point of difference is on John's use of the tradition to illustrate a theological truth, i.e., the exaltation of Jesus in his resurrection from the dead. This is not unlike John's expansion of the story of the grave clothes (20:3-10, cf. Lk. 24:12) to illustrate a point.¹⁵⁵ C. H. Dodd finds the typical appearance pattern in each of these two appearance narratives,¹⁵⁶ which suggests to this writer John's and Luke's mutual dependence upon a common tradition. Dodd, who distinguishes this tradition from folklore, believes that the story shows itself to be original and ". . . has something indefinably

¹⁵³C. H. Dodd, More New Testament Studies, Grand Rapids, 1968, p. 106.

¹⁵⁴At least; note v. 2 "we." ¹⁵⁵Cf. above, pp. 274-8.

¹⁵⁶Dodd, op. cit., pp. 104, 106, 113, i.e., A. The Situation: Christ's followers are bereft of their Lord. B. The Appearance of the Lord. C. The Greeting. D. The Recognition. E. The Word of Command.

first-hand about it."¹⁵⁷ He bases his view primarily upon the ". . . reflective, subtle, most delicate approach to the depths of human experience . . ."¹⁵⁸ found in this story.

It would appear then that there may have been an appearance of Jesus to the women (or Mary) at the tomb which is attested to in subsequent early traditions (Mk. 16:9-11). There is also mention in all four Gospels of an appearance of Jesus to the disciples, or at least the promise of an appearance to them (Mk. 16:7), so there is little doubt that all of the Evangelists accepted this as true.¹⁵⁹

A common theme in the appearance narratives is the element of doubt by some that Jesus was raised from the dead. See especially Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:11, 38-42; John 20:24-29; Mark 16:12-14. Matthew indicates that those who doubted did so after the appearance of Jesus to them while the other Evangelists point to Jesus' rebuke of those who refused to believe the reports that he was indeed alive. In Matthew the element of doubt is not rebuked but is dismissed (evidently) with Jesus' reference to his authority. Perhaps it is as Hugh Anderson suggests that the "doubt" mentioned in Matthew reflects the questionings of the later Church ". . . about a new Easter certainty and conviction."¹⁶⁰ It is probably true that the other narratives which mention this element of doubt do so with the subsequent developing Church in mind. The reference to Thomas (Jn. 20:24-29) is clearly such a reference where Thomas is representative of the doubting element in the Church.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 115. ¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹It is interesting that Paul adds more appearances (I Cor. 15:5-9) than do the Evangelists.

¹⁶⁰Anderson, op. cit., p. 224.

Another interesting phenomenon in the Resurrection narratives is John's view of the self-raising of Jesus from the dead. This is not clear in the other Gospels, but John is unambiguous in stating that Jesus raised himself from the dead (cf. 2:19, 21 and 10:17-18). Oepke says that this concept is found first in the New Testament literature in John, the earliest view being that it was God who raised up Jesus from the dead, e.g., Acts 2:24, 32.¹⁶¹

Another area worthy of comment in this section has to do with the Gospel references to the resurrection of Jesus as a fulfillment of Scripture. In Luke's and John's Resurrection narratives (as well as the Resurrection tradition in I Cor. 15) there is such an appeal.¹⁶² Part of the difficulty here, of course, has to do with determining which Scriptures each writer had in mind. Although it is not always clear which Old Testament passages are referred to, R. H. Fuller may be correct in suggesting which ones the Evangelists may have had in mind. He says that the texts most commonly used in the earliest Christian preaching included Deuteronomy 18:15 (the prophet like unto Moses), Psalms 22 and 69 (the Passion Psalms), Psalm 110 (the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God), and Isaiah 42:1-ff. and 53 (Jesus as the Servant of God).¹⁶³ However, it cannot be maintained--and Fuller would certainly agree¹⁶⁴--that the early Church expected the resurrection of Jesus because of their interpretation of the Old Testament. Rather, the resurrection of Jesus took

¹⁶¹Albrecht Oepke, "Ἐγείρω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, 1964, II, 335.

¹⁶²Cf. Lk. 24:27, 46-ff.; Jn. 20:9; and I Cor. 15:3-4. See especially Acts 2:25-36; 13:32-37.

¹⁶³Fuller, op. cit., p. 76. ¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 75.

them by surprise. The early Christians were quite concerned, as A. R. C. Leaney notes, to find some Scripture ". . . to fit a fact, and were far from inventing a fact to fit a scripture."¹⁶⁵ Few scholars would doubt that the event of Christ powerfully influenced the early Christians' understanding of the Old Testament. The importance of the Scriptures in the thinking of all Jews probably encouraged the Christians to establish the resurrection of Jesus securely in the Old Testament; and conversely, the significance of the resurrection of Jesus to the early Church drove them to the Old Testament to justify their claim that the Risen Christ was the agent of God's redemption.

It would thus appear that the references to Scripture by Luke and John--as well as Paul--which supposedly describe the resurrection of Jesus are more correctly indications that the early Christian Church's understanding of the Old Testament was radically altered by their encounter with the Risen Christ.¹⁶⁶

The Church found it difficult to find Old Testament references to the Resurrection; and as C. F. Evans writes, "Resurrection is certainly not something which could have been arrived at by reflection on the Old Testament,"¹⁶⁷ The resurrection of Jesus, then, was read back into the Old Testament, not derived from it. In fact, apart from the Resurrection actually taking place, it is diffi-

¹⁶⁵A. R. C. Leaney, "Theophany, Resurrection and History," Studia Evangelica, ed. by F. L. Cross, Berlin, 1968, Band 103, V, 112

¹⁶⁶Bultmann notes that this apologetic use of Scripture was in existence well before the time of Paul as is seen in his use of "κατὰ τὰς γραφάς" (I Cor. 15:3-ff.). Neville Clark has a good discussion of how the resurrection of Jesus caused a radical re-examination of the Old Testament in the early Church for the purposes of founding its new understanding of the Messiah in Scripture. Cf. Neville Clark, Interpreting the Resurrection, London, 1967, pp. 44-58.

¹⁶⁷Evans, op. cit., p. 14.

cult to account for the very centrality of the Resurrection itself in the thinking of the early Church, so vague was the reference to it in the Old Testament. Although this argument should not be pushed too far, the early Church's attempts to establish the resurrection of Jesus in the Old Testament should point not only to the great significance which that event had in the earliest Christian community, but also to the difficulty of locating the origins of Resurrection faith in anything other than the Easter event itself. Apart from their strong belief that Jesus had in fact been raised from the dead, there appears to be no good reason for such attempts to justify their use of the Old Testament in this matter.

It will be noted in closing that there has not been any discussion of the so-called transposed resurrection narratives in the preceding examination.¹⁶⁸ The reason for this omission is that this writer is unimpressed with arguments for calling such passages resurrection appearances. Not only do these supposed appearance stories fail to conform to the usual appearance pattern,¹⁶⁹ but also it is not clear what reasons or motives the Evangelists would have had in transposing such appearance stories. What purpose would that procedure serve? Are they attempts to deify Jesus before the cross? R. H. Fuller's convincing discussion of the passages in question has made it unnecessary for this writer to examine that area here.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸R. H. Fuller has listed these as (1) the miraculous draft of fishes (Lk. 5:1-11); (2) the stilling of the storm (Mk. 4:35-41); (3) the walking on the water (Mk. 6:45-52); (4) the feeding of the multitude (Mk. 6:32-44; 8:1-10); (5) the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-8); and (6) the "thou art Peter" saying (Matt. 16:17-19). See his excellent discussion on these passages in The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives, op. cit., pp. 160-7.

¹⁶⁹See C. H. Dodd, op. cit., pp. 104, 106, 113, 122-ff.

¹⁷⁰Fuller, loc. cit.

Also, such a discussion is not parallel in importance to the above questions already mentioned; and for these reasons it has been omitted.

AN EVALUATION OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

A careful look at the New Testament evidence for the resurrection of Jesus leaves serious questions unanswered. However, although the general character of the evidence leaves one with less than absolute confidence regarding many aspects of the Resurrection, the case is not inconsiderable. Some aspects of the New Testament proclamation are not seriously questioned, e.g., that the early Church unanimously believed that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised from the dead; but historical investigation into the nature of the event or the evidence for the event is not without difficulty at several junctures. Many of the problems, as has been shown, have to do with a correlation of the various Easter traditions. In this chapter an attempt will be made to indicate and analyze the traditional arguments in favor of the resurrection of Jesus.

At the outset it should be made clear that a decision regarding this evidence which follows cannot be made without a recourse to religious presuppositions. This question has been discussed in Chapter V where it was made clear how presuppositions play a significant role in all decisions about the past. Some Christian apologists, however, have wrongly tried to "prove" the resurrection of Jesus historically believing that they are guided only by "the facts" and that their "impartial" investigations have led them to conclude that God has indeed raised up Jesus from the dead.¹ Such men have

1. H. B. Anderson, *Christianity: The Witness of History*, London, 1939; Merrill C. Tenney, *The Reality of the Resurrection*,

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE:

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¹J. N. D. Anderson, Christianity: The Witness of History, London, 1969; Merrill C. Tenney, The Reality of the Resurrection,

frequently pointed to the prevailing presuppositions of those with whom they disagree, but have all too often failed to appreciate the degree to which their own theological or religious presuppositions have guided their work. In this chapter care will be taken to point out some of the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence set forth as well as the presuppositions which frequently accompany such evidence.

There have also been a number of critical scholars who, with reference to naturalistic presuppositions, have frequently failed to appreciate the strong cumulative witness to the resurrection of Jesus which, not without some reservations, should require more careful consideration.² This witness or evidence for the Resurrection is inferential evidence which may be divided into two categories: "objective" and "experiential" evidence. The first has to do with the interpretive evidence of sight and the latter with the evidence of Christian experience.

I. THE OBJECTIVE³ EVIDENCE

The Appearances of Jesus

The first and primary argument for the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament is his post-resurrection appearances to his

Chicago, 1963, Frank Morrison, Who Moved the Stone?, London, 1930.

²Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1970-1, I, 44-6.

³The word "objective" here does not necessarily refer to the kind of evidence which could be accounted for by an objective critical examination of the past, but to the fact that this is the evidence of "sight" by eyewitnesses who by first hand observation were able to verify the claims made about the resurrection of Christ. With regard to the appearances of Christ, the emphasis is upon the fact that Christ appeared to the disciples in a way which could be perceived by sight and sound. This is, of course, "reported" evidence which cannot be verified by a cross examination of the sources and is therefore open for numerous interpretations.

followers. All of the Resurrection narratives either narrate an appearance of the risen Jesus or it is expected that Jesus will soon appear to his disciples, as in Mark 16:7. It is clear from the Easter tradition in I Corinthians 15:3-8 that the early Church's kerygma⁴ reflects belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is also clear from this passage that the primary reason for the Church's confidence in the Resurrection is the Easter appearances of Jesus to the disciples. In this sense, the Church's confidence in the resurrection of Jesus in part is based on an inference or an interpretation drawn from the appearances. It was the eyewitness testimony of the earliest Christians to Jesus' aliveness after his death which led the early Church to conclude that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Whatever is meant by the term "resurrection," it is clear that the young Jewish Church thought it was the most appropriate term for describing the existence of Jesus after his death on the cross. This "interpretation"⁵ is of course a reasonable deduction or a logical inference if the term "resurrection" is understood to refer to one's return to life from death. However, it is not altogether clear from either the term "resurrection" or from an inquiry into the appearance stories in the New Testament exactly what it was that happened in the resurrection of Jesus. The appearance stories argue for Jesus' aliveness after death, but the sense in which this is to be understood is not clear. Can it be deduced from

⁴See Chapter IV, pp. 105, 115-8.

⁵This is the term Willi Marxsen uses to describe the early Church's belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Cf. Willi Marxsen, Gerhard Dellling, Ulrich Wilckens, and Hans-George Geyer, The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, ed. by C. F. D. Moule, trans. by Dorothea M. Barton and R. A. Wilson, London, 1968, p. 31.

the appearance stories that Jesus was raised to his former existence as Luke 24:39-43 seems to imply, or that he was raised to a new mode of existence, perhaps spiritual, as one can see in Jesus' ability to appear suddenly and then disappear as in Luke 24:13-31? Such seeming conflicts in the Resurrection narratives have led some scholars to the position that the resurrection of Jesus was a physical event in the fullest sense of that term,⁶ while others have argued for a spiritual or visionary type event.⁷ Again another position has been set forth saying that the resurrection of Jesus was more than a visionary experience encountered by the disciples, but still it was something other than restoration to his former existence. It has been suggested by several scholars that Jesus' resurrection was a mystical or spiritual event and yet corporeal, i.e., involving the resurrection of his body.⁸ A final answer to the question of the nature of the appearances of Jesus, or yet of his resurrection, may never be found which will satisfy all; but it is generally accepted that the result of what happened in the resurrection of Jesus and his appearances was the transformation of a handful of discouraged followers of an executed prophet into a band of dynamic disciples.

All of the Resurrection narratives agree that the resurrection of Jesus was to a mode of life which was significantly--and mysteriously--more than his former existence. They also agree that what the disciples encountered in their Easter experiences was some-

⁶Clark H. Pinnock, "In Defense of the Resurrection," Christianity Today, 9:6-8, April, 9, 1965.

⁷G. W. H. Lampe and D. M. MacKinnon, The Resurrection, London, 1966, pp. 36-7.

⁸A. M. Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ, London, 1966, pp. 46-8; W. J. Sparrow Simpson, The Resurrection and the Christian Faith, Grand Rapids, 1968, pp. 312-4.

thing real and objective and totally unexpected which was not brought about because of any psychical or subjective experiences of their own.

Beyond these agreements there are difficulties in just about every other aspect of the appearance stories. They do not seem to give, in themselves, conclusive evidence of what it was that happened in the resurrection of Jesus. For example, Paul's list of eyewitnesses to the appearances of Jesus in I Corinthians 15 is little more than just a list, not at all composed with a view toward modern standards of historical evidence. There is no way of examining Paul's list of witnesses and no way of corroborating the existence of such testimony. It should also be noted that none of the Evangelists, all of whom wrote/compiled their gospels after the time of the writing of I Corinthians, mention the list which Paul sets forth. There is no mention of the "above five hundred brethren" (I Cor. 15:6) in any other passage in the New Testament, nor is there any specific reference to the appearance to "James, then to all the apostles" (15:7). None of the Evangelists give this particular succession of the appearances; and since Paul does not expand on what it was that happened in the Resurrection, it is difficult to argue finally from a historical perspective that such an event actually took place. The evidential value of Paul's list therefore is not conclusive. The list here has little more historical significance than a passing reference except to say that it shows that Paul was convinced, and he believed others also were convinced that the resurrection of Jesus was a well-known fact. This, of course, is not irrelevant, but again, not at all conclusive.

The appearance stories in the Gospels have already been examined; and it was shown that, with regard to the nature of the

appearances, the time and location of the appearances, and to whom Jesus first appeared, the evidence is not very helpful in establishing a final solution to the problems. There is not enough historical evidence to say with certainty what it was that happened "on the third day." It may rightly be argued that "something" did happen to change the lives of the disciples; but the New Testament documents do not allow one to say finally what it was, only that the early Church believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Even there it is not altogether clear what they believed had happened as far as the nature of the event is concerned, but that is not the primary question here.⁹

Perhaps a final point, already referred to,¹⁰ should be mentioned again, namely that the earliest written sources concerning the resurrection of Jesus date from 52-54 A.D. (I Cor.) and between 62-95 A.D. (the Gospels). This fact in itself would generally create suspicion in the mind of the historian regarding the value of the sources since, as is well known, traditions tend to grow over a period of time. This phenomenon, of course, can be detected in the Easter narratives in the story of the guard at the tomb (Matt. 27:62-66; 28:11-15). Added to this, it is not definite that the eyewitness testimony regarding the Easter appearances is anything more than "second-hand" testimony except in the case of Paul (I Cor. 9:1; 15:8). Therefore the one who believes in the resurrection of Jesus must also confess to some degree his confidence in the validity of the testimony of the early Church concerning the fate of Jesus. One cannot rationally authenticate his confidence in that testimony especially

⁹See Chapter VII for a more complete discussion of this area.

¹⁰Chapter VI, Section 1.

because there are a number of conflicting strands within it which at present are difficult to bring together due to the uncritical nature of the sources which give testimony to the appearances of Jesus.

Although the appearance stories are the primary New Testament evidence for belief in the resurrection of Jesus, the testimony here is not the kind which would lead to an unqualified confidence regarding the events they describe. But again, they do agree that the one who died and was buried is the same one who rose on the third day and appeared to the disciples.

The Empty-Tomb Story

Perhaps the second most frequently appealed to apologetic for the resurrection of Jesus is the empty-tomb tradition. Bultmann is correct in saying that this story was used by the early Church for apologetic purposes to prove the reality of the resurrection of Jesus.¹¹ It has already been argued that the empty-tomb story was not a part of the earliest kerygma, but was generally acknowledged by all and later became a medium for proclaiming the Easter kerygma.¹² Although the existence of the empty tomb was common knowledge to both Christians and non-Christians alike,¹³ it later became a vehicle of proclamation and was used to corroborate the Easter message, viz., "He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him" (Mk. 16:6). Even though it is clear that there were apologetic motifs behind placing the empty-tomb story into the Easter traditions

¹¹Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. by John Marsh, Oxford, 1968, pp. 287, 290.

¹²Chapter VI, Section 3.

¹³The story of the guard at the tomb establishes this fact. See previous discussion Chapter VI, Section 3.

and that the story was used as a medium for the Easter proclamation, this should in no way suggest that the story was therefore a legend as Bultmann believes.¹⁴ Raymond Brown is right when he writes:

The idea that the story of the discovery of the empty tomb was invented for apologetic purposes runs against the objection that a mere empty tomb proves nothing about resurrection. Our earliest traces of Jewish apologetics against the resurrection do not reject the empty tomb; they explain that the body was taken away by the disciples or someone else. . . . Moreover, were the story entirely an apologetic invention, women would not have been chosen as the ones to discover the tomb, since their testimony would have less public authority.¹⁵

The empty tomb, therefore, was probably a well-known fact in the Jerusalem community; but it should be admitted that this fact by itself does not prove or substantiate the resurrection of Jesus. The story is bound up with the truthfulness of the appearance stories and cannot exist apart from them. An empty tomb does not mean in itself that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Indeed, if this were all the evidence for the Resurrection, it could be argued, for example, that someone removed the body of Jesus from the tomb to another location. And from the Gospels it can be shown that the empty tomb did not initiate faith, but a question and discouragement (Mk. 16:8; Jn. 20:11-ff.). An empty tomb is more of a presupposition for apostolic preaching of the Resurrection--especially in Jerusalem--than a proof of the Resurrection. The evidential value of the empty-tomb story for establishing the resurrection of Jesus is only of negative significance, therefore, in the sense that had the Jews been able to find Jesus' body in the tomb where it was placed, this would have destroyed or seriously damaged the apostolic preaching at least among

¹⁴Bultmann, loc. cit.

¹⁵Raymond E. Brown, The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, New York, 1973, p. 122n.

the Jews who held to a bodily resurrection from the dead.

The importance of the empty-tomb tradition in the current debate over the reality of the resurrection of Jesus has not so much to do with the fact of the Resurrection as with the nature of it, i.e., Jesus' resurrection was a bodily one. In this sense then, the empty tomb is not so much an apologetic for the resurrection of Jesus as it is an indicator of how his resurrection was understood. However, it must be admitted, with Edmond Flood, that one could not in any way deduce from the empty tomb alone the kind of resurrection claimed for Jesus Christ. The empty tomb is only supportive of the resurrection of Jesus, not conclusive evidence for it or even an adequate vehicle for fathoming its meaning.¹⁶

The compelling evidence for the disciples was not the empty tomb, but the appearances of Christ. This was, as Ramsey puts it, ". . . more than evidence, it was the risen Jesus Himself."¹⁷ The empty tomb for them was insignificant in comparison to such an encounter with the risen Lord. The many infallible proofs to them (Acts 1:3) came in the form of the appearances. However, for subsequent believers the story of the empty tomb had increased significance. It became a landmark for the reality of the Resurrection and was incorporated into the Church's proclamation as a clear sign of what had happened in the resurrection of Jesus, viz., "He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him" (Mk. 16:6).

The Evidence of the Church

This argument is based upon the cause and effect premise,

¹⁶Edmund Flood, The Resurrection, New York, 1963, pp. 43-6.

¹⁷Ramsey, op. cit., p. 45.

i.e., that the existence of the Church demands a cause and that the only adequate cause for the beginnings of the Church is the resurrection of Jesus. Merrill Tenney contends that the origins of Christianity can be traced from the resurrection of Jesus because one ". . . cannot affirm the effects and deny its cause."¹⁸ He writes:

Only the Easter fact can provide an adequate cause for the Easter faith. Unless the historic Person to whom the disciples had given their initial allegiance actually returned to life and made contact with them, their belief had no rational origin. No abstract process of reasoning would have inspired them to create the message of the gospel, or to preach it persistently and boldly.

The development of the church in the first century confirmed the claims that Jesus had risen¹⁹

This piece of support for the resurrection of Jesus is not only based upon the cause and effect premise, but also upon the early Church's belief in the accuracy of the eyewitness testimony to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. There can be no doubt that the earliest Christian Church believed that it owed its existence to the act of God in raising Jesus from the dead, but the means of substantiating that belief was their appeal to the witness and experience of some to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. The evidence from the apostles is quite small indeed since the only positive eyewitness testimony to the appearances comes from Paul whose experience appears to be not quite as concrete as Tenney would suppose.²⁰ The rest of the testimony has filtered through secondary

¹⁸Tenney, op. cit., p. 144.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 142. See also Alan Richardson, The Gospel and Modern Thought, London, 1950, pp. 55-7, who is in basic agreement with Tenney.

²⁰There is some question about whether John the apostle actually wrote the Gospel which bears his name. If he is the author, then of course the eyewitness testimony is increased. This writer does not believe that the apostle Matthew wrote the gospel which bears his name though he may have had something to do with one or

sources over a period of some 30-60 years before reaching the form in which it is preserved today. A casual look at the Easter narratives also shows that one cannot be quite so dogmatic regarding what precisely the earliest Church believed about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It may be concluded then that although the early Church confessed faith in the resurrection of Jesus and claimed that its origins are rooted in that event, the argument from the existence of the Church is weak because the resurrection of Jesus cannot be clearly traced through the existing traditions of the Church. The eyewitness reports are not at all overwhelming and in fact they present serious questions when one tries to fit the various pieces of testimony into one coherent and unified witness to the Resurrection. The witness of the Church therefore is certainly not the kind of evidence which would in itself lead the critical historian to any final conclusion about the Church's origins. One must exercise a great deal of faith in order to proceed backwards from the growth in the early Church to the resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, one cannot proceed historically very far, i.e., beyond the faith of the early Church regarding its origins.

Perhaps another point against this cause and effect argument is that one would not be able to use it in the first decade or so of the Church's existence since, as O'Collins notes, there was little or no proof that Christianity in its initial beginning ". . . would prove tenacious enough to maintain its distinctiveness over against pious Judaism."²¹

more of the sources the actual writer/compiler used in producing his Gospel.

²¹Gerald O'Collins, The Easter Jesus, London, 1973, p. 65.

The early Church, before its wide-spread growth, claimed that it owed its existence to God's activity in raising Jesus from the dead; and their knowledge of this was two-fold: the witness of those who encountered the risen Christ, and the witness of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32). Although one is hard pressed to examine the latter, there is great need to scrutinize the former. The argument from the Church's existence cannot be considered primary evidence so much as supplementary evidence which may add to the other testimony but may not in itself prove the case.

It should be noted in closing that this evidence, though not demonstrative, is not negligible. The historian cannot avoid the question of what it was that changed the disciples from a band of defeated, discouraged men into leaders of a thriving community of faith. There is no evidence from the New Testament that the personality of Jesus had so gripped the disciples that they were unable to think of him as dead and gone, and so they were (or became) convinced that he continued on. Without the resurrection of Jesus then, the historian has the problem of explaining the existence of the Church. To what does it owe its existence?

II. THE EVIDENCE FROM CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

This line of evidence has to do essentially with the Christian's encounter with the risen Christ and is very highly subjective especially if but one of the following examples is isolated from the rest. This argument has first of all to do with the unique experience of the disciples with the risen Christ and subsequently with the experience of the Church with her risen Lord. The strength of this argument lies in the combined witness of the Church to an encounter with the risen Christ.

The Evidence from the Disciples and Paul

It has already been noted that the Gospels present the disciples as cowardly and discouraged men following the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. Within a relatively short period of time, however, all of this changed; and the same disciples began to proclaim with boldness the aliveness of their slain leader, the result of which was the giving of the Spirit and the establishment of the Church.

This kind of evidence is also based upon the cause and effect premise which argues that the only cause significantly capable of restoring the disciples' faith and confidence in their slain master would have been his resurrection from the dead.²² The disciples claim that Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to them. This encounter affirmed to them his resurrection.

Along with the disciples' spectacular change comes that of Saul of Tarsus who devoted himself to the task of destroying the Church (Gal. 1:13); but, while persecuting the Church, he, Paul, claims to have received an appearance from the risen Christ which changed his whole life. Indeed, he began ". . . preaching the faith he once tried to destroy" (Gal. 1:23).

The argument for the resurrection of Christ drawn from this combination of transformed lives is not negligible. One must say that the disciples--and Paul--were either mistaken or telling the truth about their experience with Christ.²³ If these disciples, however, did not convey accurately what happened in their encounters

²²See Tenney, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-7.

²³With few exceptions, there is not much debate going on presently regarding fraudulent claims by these witnesses. Most scholars today discredit such arguments since the devotion and morality of the disciples have been reasonably established beyond serious question.

with the risen Christ, or if their precise testimony was "marred" in the Church's transmission of it, then their witness to such an event is obviously of lesser value in establishing the Resurrection. However, if nothing more than a subjective feeling, hallucination, etc., occurred in these experiences, then the Christian message is in serious trouble and the reliability of the disciples' witness is highly questionable. There appears, however, to be nothing in the previous experience of either the disciples, Paul, or the "other apostles" (I Cor. 15:6-8) who experienced such encounters to account for their common witness to the aliveness of Jesus after his death. The personality and teaching of Jesus clearly was not strong enough to enable the apostles to overcome the stigma of the cross (Lk. 24: 21). This, of course, is especially true in the case of Paul. This point is made quite clear by A. M. Ramsey who contends that the historian who advances the hypothesis that the teaching and personality of Jesus had so influenced the disciples that they were unable to think of him as dead:

. . . will be met by the evidence that the centre of their preaching was not the personality and teaching of Jesus but the Cross and the Resurrection. It must not be forgotten that the teaching and ministry of Jesus did not provide the disciples with a Gospel, and lead them from puzzle to paradox until the Resurrection gave them the key.²⁴

Leonhard Goppelt adds to this that the conduct of Jesus' disciples after his death is without analogy.²⁵

The fact of the changed lives of the apostles does indeed beg for some form of explanation. The arguments for subjective

²⁴Ramsey, op. cit., p. 40.

²⁵Leonhard Goppelt, Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times, trans. by Robert A. Guelich, London, 1970, p. 8.

experiences are not at all convincing,²⁶ and yet the alternatives are not easy. Either the apostles lied, or were mistaken, or they encountered something apart from themselves which caused this transformation. If the last option is taken, one is beset with difficulties within the narratives regarding the precise nature of what actually occurred to initiate their faith. All such explanations defy historical examination. It is not easy to dismiss the early testimony of the change in the disciples, but neither is it clear what they intended to say beyond their belief in the aliveness of Jesus after death. The many difficulties in the Easter traditions leave one without an adequate understanding of what was involved in the Easter event, and yet the change in the disciples seems to demand some form of explanation. This transformation of the disciples and Paul certainly agrees with the Church's belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and his subsequent appearances to the disciples.

The Experience of the Church

Although the resurrection of Jesus appears to lie beyond the reach of historical criticism, the results of it by no means lie beyond the realm of human experience. This evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is to be distinguished from the above experiences of the apostles in that their experience was from a visible encounter with the risen Christ whereas the Church today encounters the risen Christ variously through its preaching, its sacraments, and in all forms of its ministry and worship. Christ is confessed as alive today because he is active in the preaching of the kerygma and comes to the believer who submits himself to the call of God in that

²⁶See Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, trans. by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, London, 1970, pp. 95-ff.

preaching. *the early Church was an argument for the resurrection of*

The experience of the Christian with the risen Christ confirms to him the truthfulness of the message which was proclaimed to him. This witness of Christ to the believer agrees with and corroborates the witness of the early Easter confessions. Faith in the kerygma, or submission to the call of God which comes through the preaching of the kerygma, is rewarded by an encounter with the living Christ in one's present experience. *presence of the Holy Spirit--is*

Along with this, it should be noted that the belief in the witness of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church as an argument for the resurrection of Jesus is found frequently in the New Testament. In John's gospel, the Holy Spirit was to come only after the glorification of Jesus which, according to John, took place in his death and resurrection (Jn. 7:39). In John 20:22--after the resurrection of Jesus--the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples. In this sense, then, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community--at least in the disciples--is an argument for the resurrection of Jesus having occurred. In the Acts, it is the Holy Spirit who testifies of the resurrection of Jesus to those who obey God (5:32). In Peter's speech in Acts 2, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is the result of the exaltation of Jesus in his resurrection from the dead (2:29-33). Perhaps the argument could be stated thus: since the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is a result of the resurrection-exaltation of Jesus, then it can be argued conversely that since the Holy Spirit has been manifested in the life of the Christian community, then Jesus has been raised from the dead. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit to the early Christian community then was evidence to them of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. This is perhaps another way of saying that the work of the risen Christ in

the life of the early Church was an argument for the resurrection of Jesus, at least to that community of believers.

This kind of evidence obviously is of little apologetic value from a historical perspective since there are no means available to a historian for investigating the activity of the Spirit. Theologians have for sometime, however, noted that the "Last Days" in which the Church is now living were initiated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; and this fact--the presence of the Last Days--is seen in the pouring out of the Spirit (Acts 2:17) in the life of the Church.²⁷

This is obviously not the kind of evidence which can be confirmed or denied on a historical plain, and it is also not the kind which allows for easy description or explanation.²⁸ It is clear that the experience of Christ is different for every individual and is not the kind which can be expressed very clearly through language. The experience of the believer is a subjective and emotional experience which is described variously by Paul as love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22-23), or even as the Spirit ". . . bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16), and as being crucified with Christ and yet living (Gal. 2:20). The Spirit of Christ is manifested variously among Christians, and human language has long since been shown to be inadequate to captivate or concep-

²⁷See Barnabas Lindars' very careful discussion of this early Christian apologetic in his New Testament Apologetic, London, 1973, pp. 51-9. This thought is also developed somewhat by George Eldon Ladd in his A Theology of the New Testament, Grand Rapids, 1974, p. 344; and Merrill Tenney, op. cit., pp. 137-8.

²⁸Douglas V. Steere, in a very helpful essay, described the difficulty of communicating one's mystical experience with Christ. See his "The Mystical Experience," Review and Expositor, 71:323-44, Summer, 1974.

tualize precisely the Christian's experience with the risen Christ. This experience, though not open to historical inquiry, is nonetheless real and authenticating to the Christian.

The Christian's experience does not stand alone, however, but goes along with the witness of the Church which precedes it and helps to clarify to the believer God's activity in Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the kerygma. O'Collins is right in saying that:

. . . ultimately an assent to the reality of Jesus' resurrection combines knowledge of past facts with an interpretation of present experience. The information provided about the past offers a credible report. Yet in expressing belief in the resurrection--or rather in Jesus as risen from the dead--we are going beyond the evidence.²⁹

The experience is not a substitute for the factual information concerning what happened in the resurrection of Jesus; but, as O'Collins states, ". . . it constitutes the context in which those reports can be understood and appropriated."³⁰

It is here that one must return again to Bultmann. As much as anyone, Bultmann has noted the existential implications, or experience, of Easter faith; but he has failed to express adequately a concern for the historical roots of Christian faith which confesses the aliveness of Jesus after death. Bultmann does confess that God's decisive act in Jesus Christ is the basis for and antecedent to the existential self-understanding of the believer, but he will not explore very far what was involved in God's activity in Christ. He dismisses the witness of the earliest Christians to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as being mythical in nature and yet refuses to offer any explanation for the early confessions of Christ's appearances. For him this information is irrelevant. Although the Chris-

²⁹O'Collins, op. cit., p. 69. ³⁰Ibid.

tian encounters the risen Christ in the kerygma, as Bultmann says, this does not nullify the factual information which is passed on in the kerygma. Christian faith does not and cannot exist apart from the word of the disciples who followed Jesus (Jn. 17:20). The word of the disciples has a great deal to do with factual and historical information (I Cor. 15:3-5), and yet this is precisely what Bultmann denies:

The real Easter faith is faith in the word of preaching which brings illumination. If the event of Easter Day is in any sense an historical event additional to the event of the cross, it is nothing else than the rise of faith in the risen Lord, since it was this faith which led to the apostolic preaching. The resurrection itself is not an event of past history. . . . The historical problem is not of interest to Christian belief in the resurrection.³¹

For Paul, however, the reality or unreality of a single event of history is crucial to the on-going of faith itself (I Cor. 15:14).

Genuine Christian faith is not a possibility without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Bultmann has separated the existential results of the preaching of the kerygma for the believer from a genuine concern for the reality and accuracy of the kerygma about Jesus which has been preached. This is not a real option for Christian faith. Just as the resurrection of Jesus is not meaningful to the Christian without his participation in the results of that event and his encounter with the risen Christ, so also the experience which the Christian may have is not meaningful unless it is based upon a true kerygma. Otherwise the Christian cannot justify to himself that his experience was anything more than just a subjective experience. The resurrection of Jesus as an event of history gives meaning and sig-

³¹Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York 1961, I, 42.

nificance to the encounters which the Christian experiences with the risen Lord. This writer agrees completely with Bultmann when he says that the genuineness of the kerygma cannot be proven, it can only be known to faith;³² but this inability to prove the kerygma historically through the historical-critical method does not relieve the Christian from his responsibility to affirm the accuracy of that kerygma he proclaims.

It is the inner experience of the believer with the risen Christ then which is the decisive evidence for the Christian of the truthfulness of the kerygma about the resurrection of Jesus. The effects of the resurrection of Christ therefore not only create and sustain the Christian's hope (I Cor. 15:17-20) as well as his Christian experience in the world, they also point for the Christian to the reality of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Faith in this sense does not create the event, but confirms its reality to the believer. This will be discussed more in the final section of this chapter.

III. THE STRENGTH OF THE EVIDENCE

Taken separately, each avenue of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is not at all conclusive in the sense of proving that event. Even together, the proof is not compelling to the unprejudiced inquirer after the facts. However, the various facts surrounding this alleged event and the conclusions of the early Church regarding the appearances of Jesus are in keeping with the early Christian proclamation of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The

³²Rudolf Bultmann, "A Reply to the Theses of J. Schniewind," Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. by Reginald H. Fuller, New York, 1961, I, 113.

generally accepted facts are as follows:³³ First, Jesus died. Second, his death and the manner of it left the disciples in a state of despair and gloom.³⁴ Third, the disciples' defeat and sadness was transformed within a short period of time into confidence and certainty. They were certain that Jesus was no longer dead and that he had manifested himself to them in a way in which they could recognize him and hear him.³⁵ Fourth, the tomb of Jesus was found to be empty.³⁶ Fifth, the disciples themselves believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead. As Ladd points out, even those scholars who do not believe in the actual resurrection of Jesus admit that the disciples believed it.³⁷

Ladd poses a sixth fact at this point which is not so much a fact as it is a logical inference drawn from a fact. He writes:

But we must go further to the final and crucial fact. Something happened to create in the disciples belief in Jesus' resurrection. It was not the disciples' faith that created the stories of the resurrection; it was an event lying behind these stories that created their faith.³⁸

A. M. Ramsey adds to this list the fact that the resurrection of Jesus was not expected. He suggests that neither the Scriptures nor the words of Jesus had led the disciples to a conviction that he would rise again.³⁹ Ramsey does not discredit the Gospels' report that Jesus had predicted his resurrection but says that it is clear

³³Ladd, op. cit., pp. 319-ff.

³⁴Luke 24:21 indicates this much.

³⁵See Ladd, op. cit., p. 319.

³⁶As was argued before, this in itself proves nothing, but was a generally accepted fact in the early history of the Church by both friend and foe alike.

³⁷Ladd, op. cit., p. 320. ³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ramsey, op. cit., p. 39.

that those predictions, if true, caused no clear expectation in the disciples.⁴⁰

The weight of this argument lies in its ability to negate at the outset the notion that the disciples' belief in the Resurrection or their anticipation of it based upon Jesus' words would have led them to postulate the story of the Resurrection.

What fact lies at the root of this faith? Is it a subjective experience similar to a hallucination or another psychological experience? This writer contends that all of the above facts are in harmony with the earliest Christian's explanation for their existence as a community of believers, i.e., that God had raised up Jesus from the dead.

Günther Bornkamm does not believe that the despair and discouragement of the disciples following the death of Jesus will allow for a subjective explanation of the Resurrection in the inner life of the disciples. He concludes that it was the Resurrection appearances of the risen Christ--whatever their nature--that gave rise to the disciples' new faith.⁴¹

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, as has been shown, falls short of demonstration. As it has also been shown, there are problems in the harmonizing and deciphering of the Resurrection narratives; but even if such problems did not exist, there would still remain the necessity of one's encounter with the risen Christ through preaching in order for him to be open to the unique in history based upon the testimony of a group of men whose witness does

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Günther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, trans. by Irene and Fraser McLuskey, London, 1969, p. 183.

not allow for easy cross examination. It is questionable whether any number of eyewitnesses or amount of evidence, however reliable, would be sufficient to establish satisfactorily beyond question a resurrection from the dead. Adding to this is the commonly held belief that the world view of modern man is significantly different from that generally accepted in the first century A.D. which allowed for such events. It is therefore not surprising that many scholars are unimpressed with the non-critical evidence set forth by a group of disciples of Jesus in the first century.

Christian faith plays a strong role at this point. It is not just a confession of "well-established facts," but a submission to God, who raised up Jesus from the dead, who also comes to man in the preaching of the Gospel. God speaks through the kerygma to man (I Cor. 15:3-11), and man responds by obedient submission to him. The reality of the message which was proclaimed is testified to by the believer's experience of the presence of God in his life. He can, by faith, "see" the truthfulness of the message proclaimed to him. The witness of the early Church is confirmed to him as well as the meaning of their witness through the presence of the risen Christ in his life. There is, of course, a divine mystery involved here which is not open to verification by the historian's craft, but only to faith. This, however, does not take away from the reality of the event itself.

The above discussion is not an attempt to escape from reason, nor is it intended to remove Christian faith from the realm of history. It is rather a confession that God acts in history in unique ways, but the confirmation of this does not come through historical inquiry but through the presence of the risen Christ in the life of the believer who hears and responds to the call of God. Historical

investigation is by no means irrelevant for Christian faith; but owing to the limitations of the historical method and of the evidence for the Resurrection itself, one cannot discredit the necessity for a "theological presupposition" in order to enable the Christian to confess the risen Christ. That presupposition stems from and is based upon the results of God's work in the life of the one who hears and obeys the call of God.

To be sure, Jesus' resurrection is historical like other events in the sense that it had eyewitnesses who encountered the risen Lord in his appearances and who claim a certain amount of observation of his Easter activity, but it is unlike other historical events in the sense that it is significantly more than just another event of history. It is the act of God which has great importance to the man of faith (Rom. 4:25). The historian can examine to some extent the New Testament witnesses of the appearances of Jesus and he can also admit that "something" happened to change the disciples into a bold kerygmatic community, but he has no basis--as a historian--for accepting their testimony as true. Such an act of acceptance would reduce him to a "scissors and paste" historian, or rather a believer of sources from the past instead of being their critical examiner. Unless he too has had that experience which is "history--plus," he has no basis for accepting the Easter reports. He may indeed scrutinize them for their consistency and may also indicate growth within the traditions, but Christian faith must dogmatically assert that the historian as historian can go no further into the reality behind the Easter traditions.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It has been the purpose of this thesis to offer an alternative to Rudolf Bultmann's approach to the resurrection of Jesus which would not only speak to the problems which history poses for Christian faith, but also offer another approach to the Easter event and a reassessment of the Resurrection narratives.

It is true that the resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot claim to be a "historical event" in the technical sense of that term. Throckmorton has correctly noted that historical events lend themselves to empirical validation; but the Resurrection does not so lend itself.¹ As a revelation from God, it can never be proved or demonstrated to be an event of history except to the eye of faith. It does not therefore follow, however, that the resurrection of Jesus did not occur. How one solves this question depends in part upon one's understanding of history and his loyalty to the presuppositions behind that understanding.² It also depends largely upon one's understanding of the "act of God," i.e., does God initiate events in history such as the resurrection from the dead?

Rudolf Bultmann, as has been shown, has a keen sense of loyalty to a view of history which eliminates the unique or super-

¹Burton H. Throckmorton, The New Testament and Mythology, London, 1960, p. 203.

²Braaten points out that there are three topics in theology which place the greatest stress on the historical method and provide the sharpest stimuli to the current hermeneutical debate on history. They are: (1) the historical Jesus, (2) the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, and (3) the relevance of Old Testament history. Cf. Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 52.

natural type events. He believes that God's activity does not involve an interruption of the cause and effect sequence of historical events, but that He acts in a hidden way meeting the man of faith through existential encounters in his daily historical circumstance. God does not interrupt the natural sequence of events, but within them He comes to man and meets him in the everyday circumstances of life.³

The reasons why Bultmann has neglected the Easter event are clear: He has rejected the resurrection of Jesus as an event of history, first of all, because it violates his understanding of history, i.e., it claims to be a unique historical event which defies the closed continuum of events and involves a nature miracle. Secondly, he rejects it because it violates his understanding of an act of God since it speaks of God's activity directly in the past (in Historie) rather than in man's present personal existence. Thirdly, the resurrection of Jesus is rejected because it violates the notion of radical faith since it places faith on an objective level which reduces faith to sight. Finally, Bultmann has rejected the resurrection of Jesus as an event of history because it seeks to answer the paradox of the relation of the historical Jesus to the early Christian kerygma by supplying the "what" and "how" of the continuity between them. He is only interested in the "thatness" of this continuity. That continuity for Bultmann must remain a paradox.⁴

³Bultmann admits that this statement is true in part in his response to Bornkamm's discussion of this theology. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "Reply," The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, ed. by Charles W. Kegley, London, 1966, p. 257.

⁴He does not deny that the continuity exists, but he refuses to go behind the that of it to the what or how of it. Rudolf Bultmann, "Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus," Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der

It seems quite clear, as John Macquarrie indicates, that Bultmann has eliminated the Resurrection as an event of history on the basis of his historical presuppositions prior to an investigation of the reports surrounding the case.⁵ He has, however, chosen not to disregard the existential implications of Easter faith, even though he dismisses the nature miracle involved. He has called the resurrection of Jesus simply an interpretation of the "significance" of the cross and is not interested in how Easter faith arose. The extent to which this understanding of the Resurrection has been supported by the New Testament, however, is not convincing, but leaves serious difficulties in understanding the New Testament kerygma. The major part of the thesis has involved an analysis of the Easter traditions for the purpose of understanding better the Easter proclamation of the early Church.

It has been argued that the notion of history which does the best justice to the New Testament is that which views the resurrection of Jesus as a historical-theological event in the sense that it is understood and appropriated as the act of God not through a neutral examination of the past, but through submission and obedience to God. This approach will be summarized presently.

The primary focus in this thesis has not been upon the question of history, however, so much as it has been upon the Easter traditions themselves. Bultmann's assertion that the origins of Easter

Wissenschaften, Heidelberg, 1960, pp. 8-9. He will admit with James M. Robinson, however, that the what and how of the continuity of the work of Jesus with the kerygma have to do with the fact that both have a view toward leading one to a decision regarding a new possibility of existence. Ibid., p. 22.

⁵John Macquarrie, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought, London, 1971, pp. 362-4.

faith have been obscured within these traditions by legend⁶ is hardly fair to the Easter narratives. He rightly sees a number of discrepancies within the narratives (supposed or otherwise), but the basic message is the same in all of the Easter traditions. Even though there are a number of developments and discrepancies within the Resurrection narratives and even though the only existing sources were written admittedly at least thirty years after the Easter event, there are a number of basic agreements in the traditions which together proclaim one essential message, i.e., that Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified has been raised from the dead.

Although there is a great deal of confusion regarding some of the aspects of the New Testament reports, e.g., the location of the appearances, etc., the kerygmatic assertions of Jesus' aliveness after death are in harmony with all of the Easter traditions. The question naturally arises, what is to be made of these phenomenal reports? Did the resurrection of Jesus actually occur as the New Testament says it did?

It has been argued that the answer to the above question must begin with a presupposition, the basis of which is one's own religious experience. That presupposition has to do first of all with one's view of history. Is history open to such events? If the answer is no, then one must explain these reports in a way which is in harmony with his view of history as Bultmann has done. This is the reason why all such discussions of the resurrection of Jesus must begin with an examination of history and why Christian faith must define itself in relation to the problems which history poses for

⁶Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, London, 1970-1, I, 46.

Christian faith.

It has been shown that the modern understanding of history rules out in advance by assumption the occurrence of unique events in history such as the resurrection of Jesus. This understanding of history operates primarily on the assumption of a closed causal nexus, and consequently all events are of the same order and have a "natural" explanation. The historian explains events based upon analogy and his own experience; and since a unique event is without analogy and also is not part of his experience, he must rule it out as an event of "history." In methodology at least he must say that the "bolt from the blue" does not occur.

This view of history is, of course, out of harmony with that of the Bible which speaks of a God who acts in history in super-natural ways in time and space events. It has therefore been suggested that the appropriation of such events, if they occurred, must be on the basis of other than strictly historical argumentation. Such appropriation and understanding is based upon religious presupposition and must be spoken of theologically, for indeed it was God who raised up Jesus from the dead. The Christian must speak of a "theological appropriation" in this sense for he is speaking directly about the activity of God which, as Bultmann agrees, cannot be directly equated with the natural sequence of cause and effect events. Otherwise one would revert to a pantheistic understanding of God.⁷ Without the uniqueness of God's activity in Christ there is no basis for believing in Christ.⁸

⁷Rudolf Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, ed. by Robert W. Funk, trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith, London, 1966, pp. 32-ff.

⁸Bultmann also agrees at this point.

This "theological approach" to the activity of God should not however be equated with something less than history, for indeed it is "history--plus" since it describes that area of reality which is beyond the historian's field of inquiry and deals with the activity of God in history. Although the historian is in no way capable of verifying the event of the Resurrection, because the story is narrated in a historical setting, he can scrutinize the reports and check the accuracy of many of the facts surrounding the event itself, e.g., the empty-tomb story, consistency among the narratives, etc. This is not to say, however, that the fact on which Easter faith is based can be discovered by him.⁹

The historian may agree with the Christian that "something" happened at the first Easter which changed the disciples from a group of discouraged and defeated men into men of courage who began to proclaim boldly that the one who had been crucified had been raised from the dead. What led them to their willingness to lay down their lives in order to proclaim that message? Both Christian and historian alike will agree that something happened to bring this about, but the historian must admit that he cannot say finally what it was since the answer lies beyond his field of inquiry. He can only say what the New Testament sources believe happened. Christian faith, however, cannot be so non-committal about this "something" which happened in history. The Christian can speak of God's unique activity in Christ as the basis for the change in the disciples and the explanation for

⁹This writer takes exception to Karl Barth at this point because Barth appears to be unwilling to allow the historian to examine in any way the New Testament testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Volume III of The Doctrine of Creation, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, Edinburgh, 1968, II, 446-7.

the New Testament kerygma.

The logical question now is, on what basis can a Christian make such a big presupposition about history? Why should the Christian be open to the miraculous or unique activity of God in history? The answer set forth in the preceding pages is that of religious experience. It is only because the Christian has heard the call of God in the Christian proclamation and submitted himself to it that he can agree with the kerygma of the early Church that God is alive and has acted in raising Jesus from the dead. The Christian's encounter with the risen Christ enables him to agree with assurance with the early Christian proclamation. His encounter with the risen Christ corroborates the message he has heard and leads him to a new understanding of history, i.e., that it is open to the unique. The kerygma "makes sense" to him because he has received the benefits, i.e., the gift of the Spirit, inherent in the Gospel which testify to him that there is a God and that he does act in history (Rom. 8:14-ff.).

The problem with all such religious experience is, of course, that it cannot be subjected to any critical verification methods and that it cannot be "proven" scientifically or historically to be anything more than a subjective feeling. This is true, however, only if religious experience is examined by non-religious methods which at the outset deny by assumption that religious experience is a result of a divine-human encounter.

The Christian, on the other hand, may argue quite strongly that his faith cannot be reduced to subjective or psychologically induced experiences because it is the result of God at work in his life. It is objective in the sense that his Christian faith is based upon a unique act of God in history and is corroborated by the evi-

dence of his religious experience which comes from an act of submission and obedience to the call of God in the proclamation of the Gospel. The neutral observer can only be invited to "taste and see that the Lord is gracious."

The Christian's experience does not prove to a neutral observer the reality of the kerygma which he proclaims though it serves as a correlate to the Christian for understanding the testimony which he has received in the preaching of the Gospel. The analogy of experience--if that is a correct designation--then is to be found in the rest of the Church's testimony to the work of God in their midst through the preaching of the Gospel.

This writer has tried to show in this thesis that Bultmann's understanding of history is too restrictive and inappropriate for an understanding of the activity of God. This restrictiveness has led Bultmann to a misunderstanding of Christian origins and the Easter message. In the alternate approach to the resurrection of Jesus, this writer has sought to point out the inability of the historian to examine redemptive history--a point which Bultmann is readily willing to make. This concession, however, has not led to a re-evaluation of the biblical understanding of history or the Church's kerygma, as Bultmann has done, but to another appraisal of the historian's craft and the field of his inquiry.

Once this appraisal of the modern method of historical explanation has been made, however, one has not thereby solved the problems of Easter. The question of what precisely happened in the resurrection of Jesus must still be worked out. A careful examination of the Easter traditions themselves is still necessary since there are numerous discrepancies in the Resurrection narratives (apparent or otherwise) which must be scrutinized carefully in order

to understand the meaning of the Church's Easter confession. It has been shown, however, that even though some problems in the Resurrection narratives remain unsolved, the basic message in each is quite clear: Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, has been raised from the dead, and by this deed is seen to be the exalted Lord and Christ. Also, the early Christians were in common agreement that this act had significant implications for Christian faith and made possible not only a new self-understanding (Rom. 6:5-11), but also a new hope for victory over man's greatest enemy, death (Rom. 8:11, 17, 22-25).

The Resurrection therefore has to do not only with the present, as Bultmann believes, but also with the past--i.e., God has raised up Jesus from the dead, and with the future--i.e., "He who raised up Christ Jesus will also quicken your mortal bodies" (Rom. 8:11). This interpretation of Easter does justice to the biblical understanding of history as well as to the Church's confession of the risen Christ.

These quotations, for all that, are far from ideal. I am aware of this. They are sufficient to show that there is no doubt but that the ideas of death, resurrection, and angels are closely connected with each other, and that therefore it was quite natural for the Jews of Christ's time to think that the young man who came from the tomb was an angel, later on to develop a tradition which spoke of two angels, and still later to identify these two angels as Michael and Gabriel, as was done in the *Apocalypse of Isaiah*. One might even have guessed that in some circles the angels would be indefinitely multiplied. This seems actually to have been the case, though the evidence is found only in the corollary form, for in the old Syriac text (B) of Mt. xiv. 4, there is the curious interpretation, "with angels of human form" (which is the same as the Latin text, "angelus humani corporis"). It should be added that the identification of angels came of course much later than the Christian era, but it is probable that the

The belief was widespread among the Jews that at the time of death angels were present to help the departing spirit. This belief is represented in the New Testament in Luke xvi. 22: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom." It is also found in the late Jewish theology, e.g. in the Targum on Cant. iv. 12 (Schöttgen, Horae Hebr., i. 301) it is said: "Only the Just can enter Paradise, and their souls are brought there by the angels." So also we are told in the Cabb. denud. of von Rosenroth, Idra Rabba, §§ 1137 f.: ". . . Rabbi Jose and R. Chiskija and R. Jesa died, and their companions saw that the holy angels carried them away"; and according to Schöttgen, Horae, ii, 657, R. Isaac said, "When a soul is worthy to be brought through the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, Michael the great prince accompanies it and commends it to peace with the ministering angels." In the same way, in the Apocalyptic Book of Adam, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael take the body of Adam. (The Book of Adam is no longer extant, but it is imbedded in the Apocalypse of Moses, ed. Tischendorf; cf. also the Vita Adae et Evae in the Abhandlungen of the Royal Bavarian Academy of Munich, philological and historical division, new series, for the year 1878, and the Denkschriften of the Vienna Academy, philosophical and historical division, for 1893. The date of this book is naturally uncertain; it seems probable that it is earlier than the Epistle of Barnabas, cf. Apocrypha Anecdota, Texts and Studies, ii. 3, p. 145; but the strongly Messianic doctrine which it contains may be Christian: this, however, is immaterial for the present purpose, as the imagery is surely taken from Jewish sources.) Again, just as the Book of Adam bears witness to a tendency to put four archangels in the place of Michael, the Tractate Ketuboth, 104a, in the Talmud shows a still further multiplication: "R. Eleazar said, In the hour when a just man leaves the world three troops of ministering angels meet him."

These quotations, for which I am indebted to W. Lueken's Michael (see esp. pp. 43-52), might probably easily be added to; but they are sufficient to show that there is no doubt but that the ideas of death, resurrection, and angels are closely connected with each other, and that therefore it was quite natural in the time of Christ for Jews to think that the young man whom the women saw by the tomb was an angel, later on to develop a tradition which spoke of two angels, and still later to identify these two angels as Michael and Gabriel, as was done in the Ascension of Isaiah. One might even have guessed that in some circles the angels would be indefinitely multiplied. This seems actually to have been the case, though the evidence is found only in the conflated form, for in the old African text (k) of Mc. xiv. 4, there is the curious interpolation, subito autem ad horam tertiam tenebrae diei factae sunt per totum orbem terrae et descenderunt de caelis angeli et surgent (?es) in claritate vivi dei simul ascenderunt cum eo et continuo lux facta est.

It should be added that the Rabbinical books quoted are of course much later than the Christian era, but it is probable that the

¹Kirsopp Lake, The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, London, 1907, pp. 280-2.

Jewish theology did not change so much as to render them useless for the present purpose, and in any case the evidence of Luke and the book of Adam is quite early.

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